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## Perspective on Karma: The Deeper Rhythm of Life

B. DE ZIRKOFF

The doctrine of Karma is one of the most metaphysical and one of the most difficult doctrines to really understand. Now, the deeper reaches of this teaching are not for mere inquirers, nor would it be helpful to tell the inquirer that the doctrine of Karma is so metaphysical and abstruse that no idea of it can be given. That of course would be absurd. The basic idea, however, of Karma, if it could be understood by the millions in the Occidental lands, would certainly produce a tremendous revolution of thought and of morals. And it could be understood by the millions in its very, very simple form of Cause and Effect. But we are studying this idea here from slightly higher and more deep levels of thought, so we have to

try to understand a little more than is given to a mere inquirer.

One very important thought to remember in connection with this teaching is the meaning of the word as a word. There is the Sanskrit root kri, k-r-i. It's a verb, a verbal root which means to make or to do. Dr. de Purucker explains this: By adding the suffix ma to the root kri or the stem kar, which comes, through one of the rules of the Sanskrit grammar, from the root kri, we have the abstract noun, Karman.

So in one of its forms it is Karman, and in one other form of the same root it's karma. It means the same thing, but Sanskrit has two forms for every substantive: the





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## EDITORIAL

### THE CURRENT OF WHOLENESS

Preserve harmony in your own soul and it will flow out to all others, for its effects are more powerful than you understand, and more far reaching. Sink all thought of self, all personal ambition, the small jealousies and suspicions that mar the heart's melodies, in love of the work and devotion to the cause.

*Cavé from "Fragments"*

The world today is in deep crisis both in the outer world and perhaps even more profoundly in the interior life of humanity. The Chinese ideographic language provides us with an approach to crisis by seeing it as complementary combination of two elements, one being opportunity and the other danger. The acceleration of world events: overwhelming ecological destruction, economic disparity leading to collective violence, ethical disintegration, and loss of the deeper rhythms of life through the pursuit of consumerism and materialism are leaving much of the world spiritually bankrupt. Yet amidst these great dangers, deeper opportunities are opening up...the compassion to transform outmoded and stagnant world views has never been more eventful or dynamic in known world history. New and more spiritualized modalities of healing, ecology, scientific perception of the universality of life, peace awareness and practice...etc. are in full force of growth. It is as if a great wave of spiritual force were encircling the globe, a "wind of the spirit, rearranging, remaking, reshaping." ....

With the above in mind, what is the *Dharma*, what is the *responsive relationship* of the network of the Spiritual Movements around the world to meet this crisis with? Are we ready for the deeper practice and desperate need for serious change, both organizationally and individually that this time is calling for? The time is dawning when the rampant factionalism of decades may begin to be healed on a grass roots level, and a new groundwork is emerging as a basis for dialogue that

*Crisis as  
Opportunity*



transcends personal and organizational brain-mind barriers. Is not now a time to open up the potentiality for an authentic openness and re-structuring to achieve broader vision and new focus? This task it seems requires a special, almost sacred kind of force or power and a fluid, nature-linked breadth of mind.

Emerson with insight and well-grounded mysticism points: "All [authentic] power is of one kind, a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallell with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength." Here is defined genuine power, a force which is in harmony with natures' current of wholeness and "parallell with the laws of nature." Certainly it is a difficult inner task to toss our personal ambitions, pet ideas, past wounds, and pride of "knowing" into abeyance long enough to listen deep within and perhaps hear a little of what nature's current is calling for us to bring to birth in our own lives today.

How do we listen truly? Emerson's key is clear: to be "parallell with the laws of nature" and to "accomplish a sharing of the nature of the world." This is a return of power to its place of origination of oneness with nature, and this sharing is an inner act of sacrifice (literally to make sacred). Is it not upon this fulcrum that all genuine spiritual traditions are initiated, live, and hence find new growth? How do we enact this making sacred?

Humanity has achieved 'power', and in the frenzy of its application profaned the sacred into material force.

*Continued on page 23*



continued from front page

nominate, and the crude form. Just like it's perfectly correct to say 'yogi', but the form that you'll find in the dictionary would be 'yogin'. Note also that the English word 'create' is related to *kri*, to produce, to bring forth, to bring about—not in the theological Christian sense to make something out of nothing, not in that sense at all. So let us remember that the word 'create' in this connection means to produce, to manifest, to bring about something out of something else, not out of nothing. Literally the word means doing something, making something, and therefore it carries the meaning of action, but it has deeper meanings. It's a technical term, a term from which hangs a whole series of philosophical doctrines of a nature not always easily understood. It's all very well to speak of Karma as action, as action and reaction, but when you have covered these particular meanings of doing and making, acting, producing, you still have to bring out the important thought that Karma does not only mean action in itself, devoid of results, but implies the causation bringing about certain results. So it would be correct so say that Karma means action and reaction in one. That is a metaphysical concept which is unfamiliar to Occidental minds. We have schooled ourselves through various philosophical and religious ideas to consider action and reaction as separate from each other, related to each other, but nevertheless separate. And we haven't the slightest idea of how certain reactions or results ensue from certain actions. But the metaphysical concept of Karma, the Oriental esoteric view, is that every action has within itself its own effect or series of effects, and interestingly enough they are simultaneous. They are not divided from each other by time, although it takes the illusion called 'time' to bring results into manifestation. The main point to realize is that action and reaction are intimately interconnected, two faces of the same coin; that they can never be separated



without destroying each other; and that peculiarly enough there seems to be a very metaphysical relation between Karma (or the original action) and what we call Time. Many lectures could be built on that subject, many aspects brought out.

Now we can consider the subject of Karma from another standpoint, that of results. The word 'results' or 'fruits' seems to be the most general application in the technical sense of this term in the Esoteric Philosophy. Dr. de Purucker points out very definitely that Karma is not a 'law'; no God made it. A human law, let us remember, is a maxim of conduct or order of right, laid down by a lawgiver, forbidding what is wrong and inculcating and commanding what is right. This may be an ordinary municipal law, a federal law, a universal law of morality or general behaviorism which the powers that be—national, international—try to keep alive for the good of all. And having outlined it, and put it in the statutes, they try to preserve it, defend it, so that people live under it. Karma is not that kind of a law. It has not been established by any man, or any demi-god, or any god. It is not forbidding anything. It is not commanding anything. It is not a statute limiting human or other actions within certain limits, and if you transcend these limits something or somebody or some authority comes and whacks you on the head for having transcended a certain limit of action. Karma is nothing of this. Such an explanation only negates what Karma is not.

Again Dr. de Purucker puts it clearly: "Karma is the habit of universal and eternal Nature . . ." It is a habit. It is a way in which things behave. It is a—shall we call it—a mannerism of

universal Nature. That may sound odd. It's a behavior pattern of universal Nature. To ask why universal Nature behaves that way seems an empty question. I don't think you have any answer. Just like the question why should we love each other? There seems no reasonable reason. But we most certainly should. It reminds me—with slight modifications—of a physical fact: the nature of electricity. The renowned Sir William Bragg, the English physicist, was asked, 'What is electricity?' He said: "I don't know." But he added: "If I were pressed on that point I would say that it is the way in which matter behaves. And if I were to be pressed to ask why does matter behave that way, all I could say is that it jolly well does so." And that's about it. Nature's way is to jolly well act and react to every action. But our finite minds are unable to understand causes, and so we use certain words like 'habit' or 'pattern' in which nature operates.

*The metaphysical concept of Karma...is that every action has within itself its own effect ... and...they are simultaneous*

Karma is the habit of universal and eternal Nature, a habit inveterate, primordial, which so works that an act is necessarily, by destiny, followed by an ineluctable result, a reaction from Nature in which we live. An act is followed by a reaction from the Nature in which we live. If you ask 'What do you mean by Nature?' the answer is anything from the next atom, to me, to the furthestmost star, visible and invisible, the surrounding totality of the ALL. Dr. de Purucker points out that when Karma was called by A.P. Sinnett in H.P.B.'s days the law of ethical causation, this was an inadequate and misleading term, because, first, Karma is more than ethical, it is both spiritual, mental, psychical, and physical planes. To call it the 'law of cause and effect' is much better, because more general,

but even this does not describe it adequately at all. The very essence of the meaning of this doctrine is, that when anything acts in any state of imbodied consciousness, it sets up an immediate chain of causation, acting on every plane to which that chain of causation reaches, to which the force extends. Let's dwell on this for a few moments. It seems that what Dr. de Purucker is emphasizing here is that the doctrine of Karma includes the idea that when anything acts in any state of imbodied consciousness it sets up an immediate chain of causation, acting on every plane to which that chain of causation reaches, to which the force extends.

*We cannot produce a thought  
or indulge in a feeling or in  
an act without producing a  
reaction sooner or later  
from every part of  
surrounding nature*

And I jump here deliberately to Dr. de Purucker's *Occult Glossary* (p.89) and bring to your attention another extension of the same idea: When an entity acts, he acts from within; he acts through an expenditure in greater or less degree of his own native energy. This expenditure of energy, this outflowing of energy, as it impacts upon the surrounding milieu, the Nature around us, brings forth from the latter perhaps an instantaneous or perhaps a delayed reaction or rebound. Nature, in other words, reacts against the impact; and the combination of the two factors. Karman is, in other words, essentially a chain of causation, stretching back into the infinity of the past and therefore necessarily destined to stretch into the infinity of the future. It is inescapable because it is in universal Nature, which is infinite and therefore everywhere and timeless; and sooner or later the reaction will inevitably be felt by the entity which aroused it.

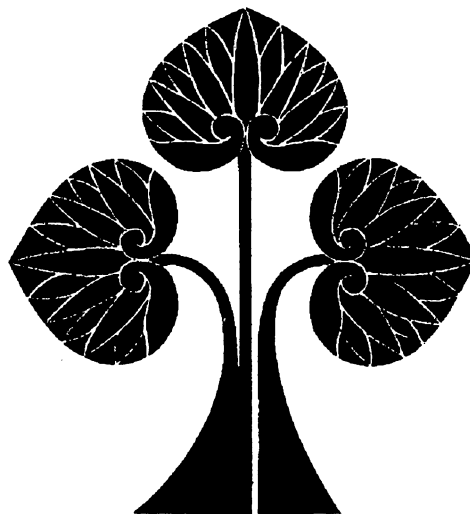
One point perhaps needs a little clarification. Everyone of us acts in

various ways. Physical action is one. But physical action of course is only a result of our thinking, of our feeling. We had to think and feel in a certain direction and indulge in a certain trend of either good or evil thinking and feeling before we actually came to the point of acting in that direction. Action or a deed is the cumulation of a great deal of thought and emotion and feeling and desire that some time, some day comes to the point of actual action. And then the deed is done. It may be a wonderful deed, or it may be an evil one. The man acts from within—very, very deeply so. If a man undertakes a journey, if he builds a family, if he builds a great concern, if he writes a book, if he initiates a great movement—whether it be something great, noble, or a line of evil action—there has been a great deal of thought and feeling put in that direction long before, and these have come from within. So 'action' as a word could very well mean 'thought' in many cases, because thoughts are things. The ultimate of thought is action. Even here in this room I utter some sentence embodying an idea. Everyone of you is going to react to that idea in a different way. One may say, "That's wonderful." Another say, "I don't quite understand it." A third one, "Yes, there's something in it, but I would like to know more of what you really mean." Perhaps, again, there is one—I hope not—but there may be one who simply didn't hear it, it didn't register at all. Your reactions to the same

thought are different, but each one has a reaction of a kind. Now, the truth of it is that we cannot produce a thought or indulge in a feeling or in an act without producing a reaction sooner or later from every part of surrounding nature, visible and invisible, from beings and entities we do not know even the existence of, do not even suspect exist. And our thoughts and feelings and actions are like the ripple from that falling stone in the pond which goes on widening; and the question may then arise in our minds, how far will that ripple reach? Will it ever reach a shore or will it go on widening indefinitely? And if it does reach a shore when will it come back, bringing its reaction? These are all profound metaphysical ideas worth pondering over. The result, the reaction from surrounding Nature to our actions, these two together make or are Karma. Now, having stated that, we haven't said very much; we've just helped to elucidate one aspect of it. And here is another quote:

Human Karman is born within man himself. We are its creators and generators, and also do we suffer from it or are clarified through it, by our own previous actions. But what is this habit in itself, *das Ding an sich* [the thing in itself] as Kant would have said, this inveterate, primordial habit of nature, which makes it react to an arousing cause?

At this point I pause for a moment to bring out an illustration or two which perhaps will help. In all of these things the key to the understanding of the Teachings is analogy, that there is throughout nature a concatenation or chain of causes so that every plane reflects every other plane; the small is a part of the great, and the great manifests nothing else in essence but what the small manifests on its own plane as a replica. Now take for consideration your own physical body. It has organs, and we will imagine that these organs function well, they are in a healthy condition. Now, there has been established through many years of life certain habits of food, breathing,





of exercise, certain rhythms of heart and pulse and of nervous energies, and in every man it is different from another, that is, to some extent, although the general pattern is the same. Each man has his own rhythm, certain vibratory rates which are essential to his well being; and within the framework of that physical body there has been established a certain habit of life. When we say that that man lives a certain type of life we simply mean that he has established a certain rhythm within himself which cannot be deviated from without producing an unwholesomeness, a dis-ease, a condition of not being at ease which we call disease. Now you introduce into that body some material that is poisonous to it, that breaks up the existing rhythm, or without introducing anything into it, you subject your body to certain conditions which it is unaccustomed to and which it rebels against, and you find you are in a very uncomfortable situation which you will want to throw off. The entire structure of your physical body—even bringing to the picture more ethereal energies than physical—will react against the invading force or set of conditions and try to throw them out. The main thought here is that you as a man, as a consciousness, have established a pattern of your body and of your astral structure which you want to preserve. This is the pattern through which you evolve. It is the blueprint of your tenement, of your vehicle, and you, as a consciousness manifesting in it, want to preserve it intact. So you react powerfully, perhaps on several planes, to equalize the disturbed equilibrium, to reintroduce harmony where disharmony has threatened to invade, or to heal whatever wound or dislocation or disharmony has been temporarily produced. If you were the disturbing element, if you were the entities that had invaded the stronghold, and if you could speak and speak theosophical language, you would say, "We are up against Karma; we are up against a power which seems to react against us." What would that power be?

Suppose there is a cell, an atom, an electron, a group of them, experiencing your own human dominating element that is trying to oust the invading force or re-establish the disturbed equilibrium. Obviously the karmic agency or the agency of reaction is you, the man, man's own consciousness. Man's own consciousness as far as your body's growth is concerned, inner and outer, is the dominating psycho-spiritual force. It has established a pattern. It has made a blueprint through many ages of evolution within its own hierarchical system, and to come down to the very root idea now, it is the man's will, his will power, will-essence, which is the ruler, the guiding, conforming, harmonizing, ruling element, which tries to introduce harmony throughout this hierarchy, and forcefully and powerfully reacts against everything that may disturb it, and rightly so. On the plane of mere human action, in a country inhabited by some 200 million people let us say, there is even a human manifestation of that fundamental law of nature, a very imperfect manifestation, but we can see in it an analogy—a state built by men with a certain amount of human wisdom and intelligence. That state imposes certain rules of conduct, certain ideas which it considers, as a collectivity, to be good for the people, and any disturbing element that will try to overthrow the existing pattern will be rebelled against. And the state in its collectivity through the necessary agencies will try either to calm or to pacify or throw out the disturbing element to preserve throughout the land the smooth flow of certain collective will that through the years or maybe centuries has been impressed as a pattern upon the people. That's a human manifestation of our example of analogy, a very imperfect one, but it reflects the same spiritual principle.

*We actually live and move and have our being, as St. Paul says, in a greater entity than our minds can conceive*

Now we jump a little here. We human beings, we animals, we plants, minerals, atoms, superhuman beings, demi-gods, mahatmans, Avatars, what not—the various kingdoms of life—we're all cells, integral and inseparable cells, in a tremendous structure, a cosmic structure which has a spiritual head. We actually live and move and have our being, as St. Paul says, in a greater entity than our minds can conceive. All of us live as cells in the mental, spiritual, psycho-magnetic and even astral structure of the entity which may be called—just for the sake of argument—the divinity of the Sun. And we evolve within the consciousness of that being. Don't you realize



that that entity has its own habits, that it has its own patterns of thought, that it has its own blueprint of action, the result of the evolution of that entity through millions, perhaps billions of years in the past? That entity some time in the distant past was a man, like ourselves. And we at that distant time were then perhaps mental thoughts in the constitution of that greater Being. Today we are human beings in the realm or domain over which it presides. The tremendous will or wills of the highest spiritual beings within that system have established currents, patterns, riverbeds, which we miscall laws. They are not laws. They are habits. And every time we as evolving entities act or think or feel— independent as we are in our choice— against the current of these established patterns, we experience the collective reaction of the whole system against which we can do nothing. The only way by which we can be absolutely free within that system, absolutely free,



is when we become completely attuned and harmonized with the pattern and the web of its consciousness and of the current of its forces. And we call those patterns and those habits of higher beings by the name of Karma. I refer again to what Dr. de Purucker says on this point:

"What is this habit in itself. . . this inveterate, primordial habit of nature which makes it react to an arousing cause! . . . It is the will of the spiritual beings who have preceded us in bygone kalpas or manvantaras, and who now stand as Gods, and whose will and thought direct and protect the mechanism and the type and quality of the universe in which we live. These great beings were once men in some former great manvantara. It is our destiny ultimately to become like unto them, and to be of their number, if we run the race of kalpic evolution successfully."

And so we come to this general conclusion regarding the doctrine of Karma as viewed from this angle, and ask ourselves: What is it in the quality of its manifestation? It's a chain of cause to effect, of action to reaction, of action to result, an endless chain of causation in its manifestation. And what is it in its cause? Why does it work that way? Because of the tremendous, overruling, guiding, and beneficently controlling will of the higher entity in which we live and move and have our being. We are constantly trying to adjust ourselves to its will, which is as far ahead in evolution to our will as our human will is ahead in evolution to the will of the little atoms and electrons composing our bodies. To them the human being is a god. To us, the Solar Logos is a god. Our habits as human beings to the millions of electrons within our constitution are the law, so-called law. We impress that pattern upon everything we are. To us as human beings, or the collectivity of mankind, it is the will and the pattern of higher entities which manifest as a law, as a rulership, as a guiding element, which cannot be

*But the relation of the cosmic entities to us, we emphasize, through the workings of karmic causation, is one of infinite compassion, of unspeakable love*

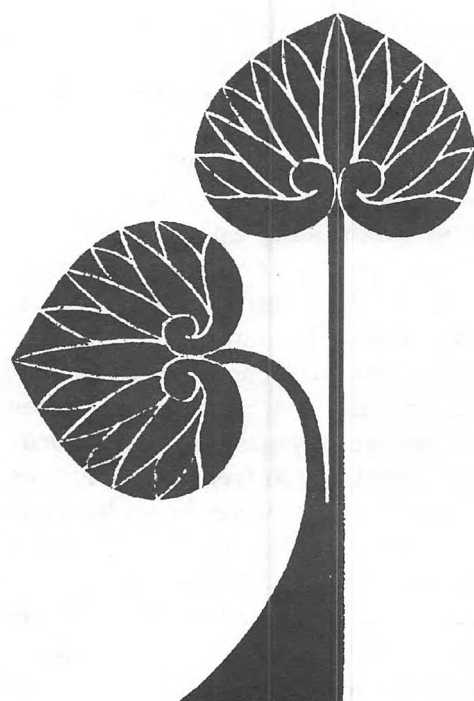
gainsaid, cannot be transcended, cannot be set aside.

One final point. These theosophical doctrines must forever be coordinated with ethics. In the intellectual view of things, one must never lose sight of the concept of love, forgiveness, mercy. The powers operative on the higher planes and who distribute and guide the habits of nature are individuals animated by cosmic love. Their consciousness is love. They have transcended all selfishness, all human ignorance, all sense of separateness. What we call sympathy, compassion, impersonal love, forgiveness, mercy, charity, are the fabric of their consciousness. They are the fabric of our consciousness also, of our higher consciousness, not yet as a rule manifest except as a little ray here and a little ray there. But to the Divinities this is a condition of every moment of their existence.

Therefore, justice can be only conceived cosmically when tempered by love. The justice of the human courts is not tempered with love. The justice of a war victor—what he imagines justice upon the victim—is not tempered by forgiveness, by love, by understanding, by the fatherly attitude: "Well, let's get together now, and maybe I can help you to do better while learning myself to do better too." These things do not exist in the relationship of nations, and they often do not exist even in the relations of a family. But the relation of the cosmic entities to us, we emphasize, through the workings of karmic causation, is one of infinite compassion, of unspeakable love, of which we know practically nothing, of a warmth of spiritual sympathy and understanding, because everything that we are, everything that

we do, everything that we think, is to them the a-b-c of an old alphabet learned ages ago. To them the human heart—today, or years gone by, or in a thousand years from now—is as an open book. They know what we are, why we are, why we are that way, what can be expected of us. They cannot make us over, we have to grow ourselves; but theirs is the help, the compassion, the sustaining power that exacts justice. And again let us remember that is a justice tempered with mercy, charity, utter understanding. For thoughts such as these we have difficulty to find words: this is not intellect alone; intellect here must be warmed with the love of the noble part, of the noblest part, within ourselves. Before we can understand the workings of cosmic justice we must understand at least the elements of impersonal love.

[Transcription of an informal talk to a study group on Theosophy at the home of Mrs. Lina Psaltis in Ojai, California in the early 1970's.]





## THEOSOPHY, RESONANCE AND FAITH

Arien Smit

*"Silence thy thoughts and fix  
thy whole attention on thy  
Master, whom yet thou dost  
not see, but whom  
thou feelest"*

If I had to explain what Theosophy is, I could of course discuss various theosophical doctrines, as far as I have understood them myself. Instead of this, however, I feel more and more inclined to answer: "If you *really* want to know, you have to find out yourself!" It may seem that with this evasive answer we are beating about the bush, but I am convinced that—of all possible answers—this is one of the most direct ones, at least when the word 'really' is emphasized. Who else should do it?

You could of course object and ask: "How about our theosophical teachers; are they superfluous?" Of course not. The necessity of their work is beyond any doubt and therefore we will not go into the subject here. I would only like to point out how encouraging it is to realize that from time to time Teachers appear among mankind. I believe, however, that their work does not consist of the forcing upon us of compelling instructions and of drawing up teachings which are formulated once for all. It is always the inferior gods that come with compulsion and dogmas. A real Teacher will always appeal to something within ourselves. In physical science this would simply be considered as a matter of resonance.

In one of our oldest theosophical manuals, *Light on the Path*, we can find the same view:

"There is a law of nature which insists that a man shall read these mysteries for himself. By no other method can he obtain them. A man who desires to live must eat his food himself: this is a simple law of nature—which

applies also to the higher life. A man who would live and act in it cannot be fed like a babe with a spoon; he must eat for himself."

I even believe that this same idea is stressed when we take the literal meaning of the word Theosophy into consideration. Theo-Sophia means Divine Wisdom. Who and where is then the god who should talk us into this wisdom? The putting of the question is in itself an indication that we have gone astray and are trying to find this wisdom outside ourselves. *Within ourselves* the divine is waiting for its opportunity. It was not by chance that H. P. Blavatsky urged us to 'learn to live from within.' Again *Light on the Path* says:

"Within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere."

Now there is a beautiful passage in the New Testament which has intrigued me for years, but which in the light of the preceding remarks is quite comprehensive. These words at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew* (vii, 28-29), which we will take as our main theme, are as follows:

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

This astonishment is not some superficial reaction to teachings of which you can make neither head nor tail. No, these sayings make a very deep impression on the people and the *essential* point is, that you *can* make either head or tail of them, otherwise the word 'authority' could not have been used in the next sentence.

About 2000 years after Jesus astonished the people, we can perhaps again feel what this astonishment could do to us. In our modern, so-called scientific age it will not be too difficult to imagine someone who has studied physics or the laws of nature for years, and who believes himself to have gone

far in this subject. Then some day by chance (was it really by chance?) he reads in one of G. de Purucker's books the words: "There are no laws of nature." I suppose our scientist will be quite astonished, but if he learns that this one sentence can be spoken on the strength of a philosophy about a living cosmos in which there is no so-called dead matter, and if he takes the trouble to study this ancient wisdom, then he cannot escape the impression that G. de Purucker knows what he is talking about—that he is 'one having authority.' This could be the beginning of an inner revolution, in which all man-made theories have to be reconsidered in a new light.

The idea can be illustrated by a simple diagram:

Jesus  

---

the people

Evidently there are two kinds of knowledge or two levels of consciousness; the level on which Jesus lives and that on which the people are living. In *John* (viii, 23) Jesus says:

"Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

From the fact that we can feel the authority of the higher level follows, that we can reach that higher level *within ourselves*. Thus, the authority is not imposed upon us from outside, but works from within. This means that the dividing line in our diagram not only separates individuals, but that there is such a dividing line within every individual.

higher Self  

---

lower self

We can speak about a higher Self and a lower self. When Jesus—speaking from his level in the first lower self diagram—says: "I am the way, the truth and the life," then *Light on the Path* completes this with the second diagram when it says:



"Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth and the life! But he is only so when he grasps his whole personality firmly, and by the force of his awakened will recognizes this personality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use, and by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach life beyond personality."

Now *where* is that dividing line within us and *how* is it possible to cross this line and reach the higher level of consciousness? *The Voice of the Silence* gives a clear answer to this twofold question. As to the first part it says:

"The mind is the great slayer of the real."

In other words, the dividing line is in our mind, in our way of thinking or, as Eastern psychology would say, in our *manas* (*manas* is derived from the verb-root *man* = to think; *manas* = the thinker or the thinking principle in man). And as to the next part:

"That which is uncreate (that which does not belong to the lower manifested world, but forever *is*) abides in thee, Disciple, as it abides in the Hall of Wisdom. If thou wouldst reach it and blend the two, thou must divest thyself of thy dark garments of illusion...allow no image of the senses to get between its light and thine, that thus the twain may blend in one."

In other words, our *manas*, which is mostly turned towards the lower level and led by our physical senses, enwraps us in dark garments of illusion which prevent the transmission of the light of our higher consciousness. As G. de Purucker says in *Studies in Occult Philosophy*:

"Cannot you see why the mind is the slayer of the real? Of course the word 'slayer' is but a figure of speech. You might phrase it otherwise and say the mind filled with its tramping, useless, fugitive, silly thoughts keeps out all higher intuitions, all higher thoughts, all higher things. In other words, there is no room for them. You know what Bernard of Clairvaux, a Frenchman, once wrote in substance:

*Having faith denotes a conviction, a certainty, that a higher interpretation of life exists. Faith opens the influence of the higher level to act in man*

Empty your mind of all that it has and is, and the spirit of Truth will enter in. This is the gist of his meaning. Just cleanse the mind of all little lower passionate small things, and the spirit of Truth will enter in."

In his book *The New Man* Maurice Nicoll draws our attention to the word 'perverse,' which is a wrong translation of a Greek word signifying 'turning in many directions.' "In ordinary life people all the time are turning in different directions, at one moment believing in one thing or in one mood, and the next moment in another thing or in another mood, not ever knowing where they are going." Their higher intuitions never get a chance and in the long run people have not the faintest notion about the existence of a higher level of consciousness. Then Jesus is not any longer with them.

The word "perverse" is mentioned in one and the same breath with "faithless" and rightly so, for the essence of faithlessness is the absence of any idea about the existence of such a higher level of consciousness. "Having faith denotes a conviction, a certainty, that a higher interpretation of life exists. Faith opens the influence of the higher level to act in man."

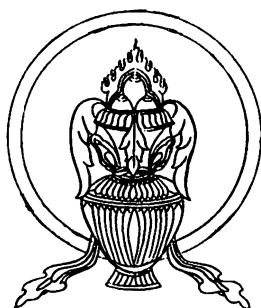
Similar ideas we find in the parable of the prodigal son (*Luke: xv, 11-32*). "Filling his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, he 'came to himself'

and arose to return to the house of his Father." In mythology the hero who is about to go to the underworld often gets the advice to fast, otherwise he will not be able to return from this underworld. Fasting or not eating means not to identify oneself with the underworld. Eating from the husks that the swine eat, like the prodigal son did, would mean a complete identification with the lower world. But "he came to himself," remembered his higher Self, and arose. Alas, this idea is in Christianity often coupled to the idea of repentance. Again it is Maurice Nicoll who points out that "repentance" is a wrong translation of *Metanoia* (*meta* as in metaphysics, metamorphosis, and metaphor = transference of meaning). *Metanoia* would then mean a transformation of the mind (*nous*). In Eastern psychology the word *higher manas* would be used; *manas* not any longer turning in many directions on the lower level of consciousness, but directed towards the higher level. Theosophy also teaches that one should not repent; repentance is a psychic bond to the past, a mournful cherishing of our imperfections. Man's thoughts should be directed towards the higher and more perfected level of consciousness. "Be ye then perfect, like your Father in Heaven is perfect," says Jesus. "One single thought about the past that thou hast left behind, will drag thee down and thou wilt have to start the climb anew," says *The Voice of the Silence*, and also: "Look not behind or thou art lost," as we should already have learned from the story of Lot in the Bible.

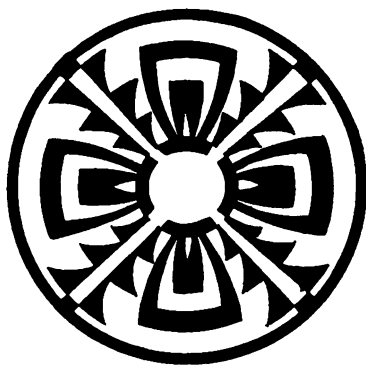
*Metanoia* is not repentance but a turning of the mind towards the higher level of consciousness. What we need is not repentance, but *faith and will*; always these two together.

"Faith without will is like a windmill without wind, barren of results," says H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Now we do not find much about 'will' in our theosophical literature, and William Quan Judge gives a very plausible reason for it in his *Introduc-*







tion to *Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms*. Perhaps we could say that it is a cosmic driving power which humans usually use (or misuse for that matter) for personal ends. About "faith" we can find rather much in our literature. It is very strange that so many theosophical lecturers talk rather scornfully about Faith. Theosophy is knowledge, they always say. And of course they are right. But when the speaker tries to suggest to his audience that he possesses this knowledge and a still deeper knowledge about which he cannot speak in public, things are beginning to look serious. We normal mortals of the lower level are for the time being dependent upon faith and will. I am even inclined to believe that it was Katherine Tingley's mission to convince us of this. In *Theosophy, the Path of the Mystic* she says:

"If effort be continual, if no failures or falls discourage the aspirant and are always followed 'by as many undaunted struggles upward,' he has always the help and counsel of the divine 'Daimon,' the 'Warrior'; and victory however far away, is certain. For this is an unconquerable power, 'eternal and sure,' an actual presence and inspiration, if you will but recognize it, having faith and faith and faith."

"Why then, it will be natural to ask, if this Warrior, fighting for us, is invincible, do we ever fail? *It is lack of faith, unwontedness of resort to this place of energy.*"

Katherine Tingley speaks very much about the dual nature of man, about the higher Self and the lower self in our diagram. When she mentions faith, of course this does not mean 'blind

belief' or credulity but faith in the sense we have used it already and as it is described in *Light on the Path*:

"With faith all things are possible. The skeptical laugh at faith and pride themselves on its absence from their own minds. The truth is that faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. *For it is the covenant or engagement between man's divine part and his lesser self.*

"The use of this engine is quite necessary in order to obtain intuitive knowledge; for unless a man believes such knowledge exists within himself how can he claim and use it?

"Without it he is more helpless than any drift-wood or wreckage that is cast hither and thither on the great tides of the ocean."

In her article *Mahatmas and Chelas*, which was published in 1884 in her magazine *The Theosophist*, H. P. Blavatsky gives a more specific description of faith:

"Higher things can be perceived only by a sense pertaining to those higher things. And whoever therefore wants to see a real Mahatma, must use his *intellectual* sight. He must so elevate his *Manas* that its perception will be clear and all mists created by *Maya* must be dispelled..."

"This perception of *Manas* may be called 'faith,' which should not be confounded with *blind belief*. 'Blind belief' is an expression sometimes used to indicate belief without perception or understanding while the true perception of the *Manas* is that enlightened belief, which is the real meaning of the word 'faith.' This belief should at the same time be accompanied by *knowledge*, i. e., experience, for 'true knowledge brings with it faith.' Faith is the perception of the *Manas* (the fifth principle), while knowledge, in the true sense of the term, is the capacity of the Intellect, i. e., it is spiritual perception."

Let us now review all our thoughts in a somewhat different way, by reading the first three verses of the ninth chapter in *The Bhagavad Gita*—. There

Krishna speaks to Arjuna as follows:

"Unto thee who *findeth no fault* I will now make known this most mysterious knowledge, coupled with a realization of it, which having known thou shalt be delivered from evil."

This is royal knowledge, the royal mystery, the most excellent purifier, *clearly comprehensible*, not opposed to sacred law, easy to perform and inexhaustible.

*Those who are unbelievers in this truth find me not*, but revolving in rebirth return to this world, the mansion of death."

Restricting ourselves to the underlined parts, we recognize our main themes. Is not "finding fault" the activity of lower *manas*? When we do not find fault, when we check the hither and thither wandering thoughts, we become receptive for higher traits, which are then clearly comprehensible. Sri Krishna Prem uses here the expression "to be directly known" (*pratyaksh-vagamam*), which fits equally well in our line of thought. When we have divested ourselves of the dark garments of illusion, nothing prevents the light of higher consciousness to stream in directly.

Here again "faith" and "will." Those who are unbelievers in this truth find me not, says the *Gita*, but revolving in rebirth return to this world. In other words, those unbelievers have to reincarnate and play the part of the prodigal son again and again.

Let us now conclude by reading a fragment of the sixty-second letter from one of the Masters to A. P. Sinnett:

"My poor, blind friend - [and are we not all poor blind friends?] you are entirely unfit for practical occultism!...However great your purely *human* intellect, your spiritual intui-

*When we have divested ourselves of the dark garments of illusion, nothing prevents the light of higher consciousness to stream in directly*



tions are often dim and hazy, having never been developed. Hence, whenever you find yourself confronted by an apparent contradiction, by a difficulty, a kind of *inconsistency* of occult nature, one that is caused by our time honored laws and regulations - (of which you know nothing, for your time has not yet come) - forthwith your doubts are aroused, your suspicions bud out—and one finds that they have made mock at your better nature, which is finally crushed down by all these deceptive appearances of outward



things! *You have not the faith required to allow your Will to arouse itself in defiance and contempt against your purely worldly intellect, and give you*

a better understanding of things hidden and laws unknown. You are unable, I see, to force your better aspirations...to lift up the head against cold, *spiritually blind* reason; to allow your heart to pronounce loudly and proclaim that, which it has hitherto only been allowed to whisper: "Patience, patience. A great design has never been snatched at once."

Reading this, perhaps we regret that often we are so quick-tempered. But, on the other hand, why postpone everything until future incarnations.

## GURUS AND CHELAS: POINTS AND PERILS ON THE PATH

*Eward Toronto Sturdy*

[Originally published in *Lucifer*, Vol. XII, August, 1893. For many years, Sturdy was the last surviving member of H.P.B.'s "Inner Group." A profound student of Esotericism, he passed away in 1957 at the age of 97 years.]

The question of the relationship between the teacher and disciple in Eastern countries has occupied the minds of many Western Theosophists. This relationship will be better understood when it is explained that there is no one system or attitude maintained, and that the position varies with nearly every group of teachers and disciples.

The important questions which a disciple must solve are - (1) In regard to such and such a man has he knowledge? (2) Will he use it selfishly? (3) Will there be a personal affinity between him and me? Then in some schools - (4) Can I have such trust in him as to surrender myself entirely into his hands and obey without any hesitation what I am told to do? It is on account of this latter question that Western students have found difficulty in understanding how a man could come into association with his Guru.

On the other hand the Guru has questions to ask himself in regard to the Chela - (1) What is his motive? (2) What is his stage of knowledge? (3)

How will he use further knowledge? Is he to be trusted? The solution of these questions depends upon the development of the Guru and whether he can see beyond the evidence which is given to ordinary man, but even with the highest it is doubtful whether complete certainty can be made.

The whole question then resolves itself into one of mutual knowledge and trust. In the most reasonable and philosophical schools the association begins gradually. It commences by a disciple going to a teacher for advice and instruction upon some point. It may be a small affair and even a promise of secrecy is not taken from him. Then other philosophical doubts arise and he finds answers and explanations which are satisfactory to him in his Guru. Meanwhile the life and character of the teacher come more and more under the observation of the disciple and we will suppose he finds these exemplary from his standpoint. He has so far found that the advice and instruction given him have always been sound; thereby his confidence has

*If we take vast precautions in the entrusting of our mere self, how much more should a man discern and proceed warily, where so great a matter as the guidance of his very life is concerned*

increased. His Guru has never shown that he had any motive other than a purely unselfish desire to benefit. By this his reverence and affection have grown. He has not asked idly, he has been an earnest seeker; he has tried to act by what he has been taught and what he has been able to accept. The teacher too has observed the Chela, has studied his character and judged his trustworthiness. This process may have taken months or years. It cannot be hurried by "faith"; each step has to be taken in the light of knowledge, not in the dark. If we take vast precautions in the entrusting of our mere self, how much more should a man discern and proceed warily, where so great a matter as the guidance of his very life is concerned.

At length the disciple has reached a point where he asks a question not to be solved from texts. Hitherto he has been helped in solving questions and doubts for which the teachings of various scriptures sufficed. Now, by his own perseverance and the guidance he has received he is brought face to face with a question which comes under a different category. The Guru has received this knowledge from *his* Guru, under the condition of handing it down to worthy disciples only, and even then only under the same conditions on which he received it. He may or may not, at first, permit his disciples so to communicate it in their turn. After long experience they may



do so. Hence arises the necessity of the first promise. It is merely one of secrecy. The Guru has judged of his disciple and trusts him. He knows that long pledges are useless; for men will pledge themselves to anything in their hunger to gratify their curiosity, or to gain what they suppose are valuable secrets for their own ends. The Guru bases his actions on his knowledge and experience. The Chela does likewise with such as he has. There is no false mystery, no mere hypothesis, no straining of faith. And so time goes on, and the respect and love of the Chela grows as he is able to see deeper and deeper into his Guru's qualifications and character. He receives instruction as difficulties occur in his growth. No artificial pledges are needed. *The conditions of holding such knowledge are taught him; he accepts it under those conditions.* He does not receive it until he is judged fit. He knows when he fails that he brings upon himself inevitable results or karmic punishment.

A man instinctively obeys him whom he has found always right and always disinterested. His obedience springs from the very bottom of his heart. Any pledge of obedience would be a false prop and a sacrilege. How can he disobey him whom he has come so much to love and reverence? Great indeed must be the inducement before he does so and great indeed the disaster.

It is not difficult to understand the enthusiasm and love of a man who has beaten with weary brain and heart against the wall which bounds our ordinary knowledge when he finds someone who gives him even a grain of the knowledge which goes beyond. He needs no artificial props to keep him to his faithfulness. And so, in his love and confidence, if he bursts into expression some day of his ever-living devotion to every expressed wish of his Guru, it is because love has grown to that extent within him that words come as a relief.

His Guru accepts it, understanding how it has grown; he never asked for

*In a country like India...cases frequently occur where the rascal masquerading as a Yogi manages to obtain very considerable sums of money from people whose credulity, or whose greed for acquiring knowledge, outweighs their discrimination*

it. It is love which has caused love to grow.

The Eternal Atman is the true Initiator, the true Guru. Nothing must eventually come between the aspirant and That. In his Guru he must worship That; in himself That. His love and devotion must not fall into a worship of form or feature or abode. His Guru is to him an expression of truth higher than himself. It is as that he worships him; but he distinguishes between the vessel and its content.

And so progress, bounded and assured in every direction by acquired knowledge, is made.

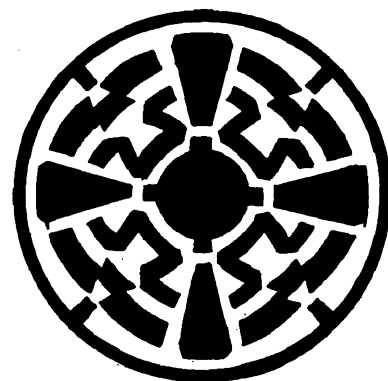
The association between Guru and Chela does not cease with death if both are sufficiently advanced. If the Chela is not sufficiently advanced, he may unknowingly receive much from his Guru, and may later learn to recognize its source.

Between the relationship as described, and the lowest forms of fanatical devotion of the ignorant to those who know little, the gradations are innumerable. It is no uncommon thing to hear a man talk of his Guru as if he were an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent being, who could do anything for the Chela if he chose; who is always guiding and watching over him at any time or anywhere. To this Guru he has a pledge of absolute obedience and devotion. He seeks instruction upon every little detail of life which he carefully fulfills, or if he does not he feels guilty of a sin, like the devotee of a personal God. He in the first place became a Chela with very little previous knowledge of his

Guru. It was not in him then, or since, to have much discrimination. He thought he saw a very great Yogi who would lead him to Moksha, and he caught on at once. He may some day alter his opinion, in which case he breaks his pledge and goes elsewhere.

These pledges of absolute obedience and surrender to the will of a Guru are fortunately rare. The chief condition is secrecy. *All the rest is part of the conditions of the knowledge given.* Such for instance, as continence, abstinence from certain foods, and so on, the breaking of which conditions, once they are known, produce their own inevitable disasters. Hence a man may receive knowledge from one man for a time and afterwards go to another, and so to a third, fourth, fifth, etc., but he should remain under the tutelage of only one at a time, and where Yoga is being practiced this is especially necessary to prevent confusion, if for no other reason. Of course where a Guru can continue or wishes to continue teaching various things, the Chela may never change, but the Guru himself may often refer his disciple to another Guru.

In a country like India, where a large number of people are more or less intently bent upon the search for Gurus, the cases of deception are constant and numerous, and cases frequently occur where the rascal masquerading as a Yogi manages to obtain very considerable sums of money from people whose credulity, or whose greed for acquiring knowledge, outweighs their discrimination.





The belief in the possibility of Yoga and the capacity of man to rise by it to the noblest and most sublime conditions, is so innate in the Indian mind, there is so much natural reverence in the people, that some centuries of imposture, which grows yearly more and more brazen-faced, have done little to decrease the reverence for the orange-red garment. This is also partly to be accounted for by the undoubted fact that many men of blameless life and great knowledge still continue to be found in India wandering as Mendicants. It has become the custom for men to wander far and wide, through cities, and in wild places, hunting for a Guru to guide and instruct them. Whether this was always so is much to be doubted. With the decline of the search for true knowledge in India, those, in whose custody it is, have withdrawn more and more from the outer life of the world, and the difficulty in finding these custodians, no doubt, serves as a fair test to prove the determination of the seeker, whether his motive be pure or selfish. Others, remembering the failure of multitudes of those who wandered and sought, make no such effort, believing either that the Guru will find them when their time has come, or that there are no Gurus, true Yogis, or Mahatmas now existing.

This latter class is an increasing one, and its growth is no doubt assisted by the Agnostic influence of Western

*Who can know the springs of action in another, when he has not yet been able to sound the depths of good and evil within himself?*

civilization, and also by a consideration of the vast numbers of men of small learning, beggars and idlers who are indifferently called Sannyasi, Bairagi, Swami, Yogi, Mahatma, Paramahansa, etc., as the speaker may consider fitting. To hear a man say that he met "several Mahatmas" at a fair or festival sounds strange to Western Theosophists who have used that term in the original sense to signify those who stand where humanity merges into Deity. The meaning of the narrator was that he had met several men in the garb of ascetics who gave him a more or less favourable impression.

It will be seen, from what has been said, that chelaship, like every other wise institution, must be founded upon knowledge, experience and judgement. If these have to be exercised to the very highest degree where the Chela comes into direct communication with his Guru, whose knowledge and power, if he has any discrimination, will in time become known to him, how much more is it imperative upon him to be ever watchful and discriminating in the case of those who, having little or no further knowledge than himself, claim to teach through being in communication with beings whose knowledge in regard to things here is, by the conception we have of them, almost infallible. He can but fall back upon his own reason and his own light as to how to act in any emergency that may arise: he can take no directions from a source he does not know, through an agency he sees little, or not at all, different from himself. He might as well have remained under the dominion of a priest, as tread such treacherous ground.

What infinite claims have been made to being in communication with God

and with superior beings! Not by deliberate impostors, not by men and women of impure and selfish lives; often quite the reverse of this. Perhaps they did evil that good might come of it, leading their fellows upon the path of virtue as they saw it, thinking that through the motive and the apparent result the means would be forgiven them. Dire illusion! A misrepresentation is only a bill drawn at long date: it will mature after the successes of having "raised the wind" have passed away. Truth cannot be juggled with or put off. Who can know another's heart? Who can know the springs of action in another, when he has not yet been able to sound the depths of good and evil within himself?

Or again, the claimant to mediatorship, either with a God, an Angelic Being, or a Mahatma, for they are all the same as far as the recipient of messages and directions is concerned, may be utterly or partially deceived either by himself or by some masquerading intelligence external to himself.

The Christian who tells you how you will "find Christ" and the mediator who tells you how you will "find your Guru" differ somewhat in their methods, but both begin with "if," and a long following list of ideal conditions, and therefore as regards proof, so far, both are equal.

The aspirant to chelaship must be tested in the world in every manner. Heavily indeed is he punished for lack of discrimination and for credulity, or for accepting claims and building on them without having probed these to the very bottom. Credulity is punished almost as heavily apparently as lack of heart, and on nothing than this latter can karmic blows fall heavier. And this is just; for discrimination, straightforward understanding of everything, as far as we can go, and then resisting the temptation to go further and treat hypotheses as facts, or take statements as such, however enticing, is the very root from which knowledge springs.



## PHILOSOPHY INTO POPULAR FICTION: TALBOT MUNDY'S "OM, THE SECRET OF AHBOR VALLEY"

by Brian Taves

*Talbot Mundy and the Theosophical Society*

Theosophy was a movement initiated in the 1870s and dedicated to the study of Oriental religious philosophy as an alternative to Occidental thinking, an idea whose novelty attracted many prominent adherents in its early years. At Point Loma, California, a theosophical community developed which attracted, among a group of artists, author Talbot Mundy (1879-1940). The object of a recent renaissance of interest, Mundy had spent a dozen years in the Far East, adventuring and studying the local culture, before becoming a writer. Beginning with novels of these regions in the tradition of Kipling, Haggard, and Conrad, Mundy won fame, but not until his contact with theosophy at Point Loma in the 1920s did he become a writer of truly literary merit. The interest in the Theosophical Society meshed perfectly with Mundy's experience of the Orient, resulting in an output during these years that was undoubtedly his greatest, both in quality and quantity. Mundy's tales became metaphors to explore the mystical philosophies of the far east, and in a series of acclaimed best-sellers he laid the foundations for the modern genre of Oriental fantasy. At the same time his work did much to subtly popularize theosophical ideas to unsuspecting readers, so that theosophy, through Mundy, had a profound impact on this type of literature. Although he was much imitated, other writers following in Mundy's path never matched his scholarship, feel for the locales and native peoples or their ways of thought; he was probably the first anti-colonial adventure author. Mundy was unique: a writer who never lost his popular appeal and is still widely read, yet also revered by a particular organization for his achievements while part of their community.

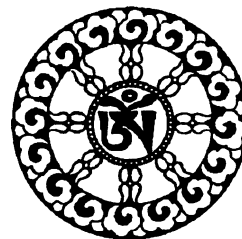
Theosophy's influence on Talbot Mundy was most strongly evident in his 1924 novel *Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley*. The serialization in *Adventure* (from October 10-November 30, 1924) and British book edition were called simply *Om*, and the subtitle, *The Secret of Ahbor of Valley*, was added for American book publication. The original title, *Om*, has a tripartite meaning: first, signifying the famous mantra; second, as an abbreviation for the title

character, Cotswold Ommony; and third, symbolizing his transformation as a European who adopts the ways of the east and is initiated into its mysteries. Indeed, Mundy hoped to add theosophical visual accompaniment to the text, unsuccessfully proposing illustrations for alternate chapters by Leonard Lester, a Point Loma theosophist. However, one of Lester's unique etchings, in the style of Reginald Machell, was used as the first of the two dust jackets Bobbs-Merrill issued for *Om*.

Tingley's hospitality in providing lodgings for Mundy allowed him to write *Om* at a much more leisurely pace than he had in a number of years, and the intellectual activity of the Society provided a creative atmosphere. Such conditions made it possible for Mundy to turn away from the "pulp" novels and hasty writing that had been a staple of so much of his output during the last few years. In *Om*, Mundy created his most distinctly literary book, noticeably surpassing earlier novels in choice of language, plot structure, theme and depth of character. Although in later years Mundy may have matched *Om*, he never exceeded its standard. Simultaneously, *Om* is his strongest fictional statement of philosophy, with the sole exception of his last novel, *Old Ugly-Face*.

Not only was *Om* written more carefully, it was meant to be taken more seriously. Mundy authored a long letter in the October 10, 1924 issue of *Adventure* to introduce *Om* to readers. Mundy emphasized the reality of the Ahbor Valley and its inaccessibility, his reasons for believing in the "Masters," and the nature of his characters. He had gained the latest information on the Ahbors directly from Sven Hedin the previous year, during the explorer's visit to Point Loma.

In *Om*, adventure, drama, humor and an unusual philosophy are blended masterfully; Mundy described the book as "soaked with sound philosophy and stirring mystery, plus dangerous adventure." The decision to write such a story would have daunted a less



courageous writer; Bobbs-Merrill was concerned about Mundy writing a novel with "philosophy," and the poor sales of *The Nine Unknown* provided apparently discouraging evidence regarding the popular interest in Indian occult novels. Probably only a writer of Mundy's established stature and popularity could have succeeded in taking such a story as *Om* to widespread popularity and publication. Even editor Arthur Hoffman felt obliged to issue a declamatory notice for *Adventure* readers, nodding to Christian sensibilities by indicating he in no way endorsed Mundy's views, adding that there was no intention of starting a religious debate in the magazine's pages.

More than in any of Mundy's other novels, *Om* reveals a multi-layered, perplexing India full of picturesque cities, regions and customs, and beneath it all a stratum intimating the supernatural. These aspects are portrayed authentically and sympathetically, and the descriptive power of Mundy's prose joins with the narrative to build and flow toward the conclusion. As one reviewer rhapsodized, "There are passages of sheer poetry, of pure wisdom..." Mundy's facility for expression, incident and atmosphere is so compelling and immediate that the story is easily invoked in their mind's eye, as if it were a movie. Moments of danger become transformed into opportunities to create destiny, allowing the reader to feel the very pulse of India and the Ahbor country while escaping into the world of *Om*. Everything seems and is in fact very real, and many of the details and philosophy of life in India remain visible today. The verisimilitude and validity of the descriptive portions becomes a crucial sup-

*Continued on page 24*



## BIRDS OF PASSAGE

*Gertrude W. van Pelt*



It is this that we humans are. We come to Earth after dipping in the refreshing Waters of Lethe, build our nests and

live our lives. Then, after dipping once more into those merciful waters, we pass into the realms which infallibly attract us, there to remain until again the call to our old haunts is imperative. But as we built our nests, we formed our ties, we incurred our debts, sometimes heavy ones.

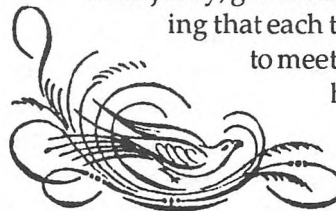
As humans we have done this an uncountable number of times, and who knows in the webs of destiny which we have woven, how many hard knots we have tied, how many cruel seeds we have carelessly sown, covered, we may fancy, by the fair flowers which likewise we may have planted and nourished by the way. Perchance we have seen the cruel seeds sprout and blossom and darken the life of one we really loved, but whose clashing aura blinded us or rendered us careless until it was too late to destroy our evil blossom, and our human bird of passage passed on over his path of destiny, while we stayed behind and longed for another chance.

And who knows how many debts we have left behind us on our journeys; services we have accepted while forgetting the servers; how many times we have taken ad-

vantage of another's ignorance or helplessness and gone on our way hugging coveted treasures we had not earned.

And now, having passed once more through the Waters of Lethe, we are here again, traveling over some of the trails we have blazed in the past, meeting in secluded nooks, in open arenas, friends, enemies, or those who are neutral; those who attract and those who repel.

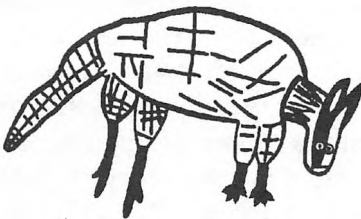
But who among this throng of wayfarers are those for whom we asked 'another chance'? Who are those who in life's Ledger hold accounts against us? The subtle marking on their breasts may escape our sight, yet here they are again, crossing our road and passing into the distance, or walking beside us for long stretches on the Path; and the glorious opportunities are ours once more. They cannot reveal themselves, for neither do they see the markings on our breasts. Yet, at least, we can welcome all our fellow travelers in sympathy, filled with a longing to deal with them justly, generously, and understandingly, knowing that each traveler has his own temptations



to meet, his own ignorance to blind him, his own danger of losing his way, and knowing too, that the subtle webs of destiny bind us all together.

## IMMORTALITY: AN ABORIGINAL MYTH

*David Unaipon*



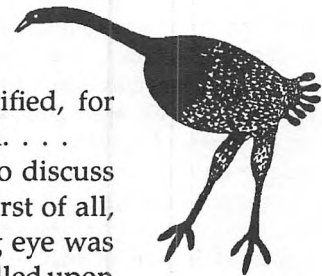
Long ago, before the race of men inhabited Australia (according to a legend of my people), the animals could talk to each other, and they had not

yet experienced death. All during the summer months it was the custom of the different animal tribes, the birds, and the reptiles to gather together on the banks of the River Murray and to enjoy the cool waters of the river and the shade of the gum-trees.

The Moon-cum-bulli—the wise old ones of the tribes—used to sit and talk whilst the younger members enjoyed themselves at play and sport. One day a young cockatoo fell from a high tree and broke his neck. There he lay dead. All the animals gathered around to try and wake him. They touched him with a spear, but he could not feel. They opened his eyes, but he could not see. The

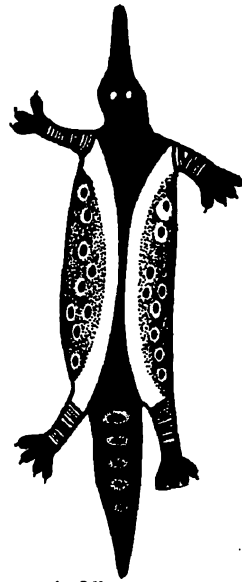
animals were completely mystified, for they did not understand death. . . .

A great meeting was called to discuss the mystery of the dead bird. First of all, the Owl, who with his great big eye was supposed to be very wise, was called upon to explain this mystery. But the Owl was silent. Then the

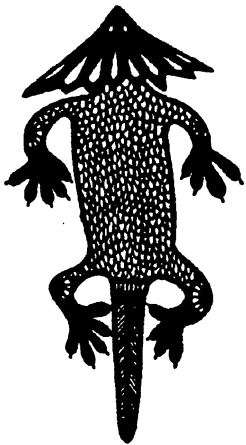


Eagle-hawk, the great chief of the birds, was asked to explain this great mystery of death. The Eagle-hawk took a pebble and threw it out into the river, and all the huge gathering saw the pebble strike the water and sink out of sight. Turning to the tribes the Eagle-hawk cried: "There is the explanation of the mystery; as that pebble has entered another existence, so has the cockatoo."

This answer, however, did not satisfy the gathering; so they next asked the Crow to explain. . . . The Crow stepped forward and took up a 'whit-whit'—a small egg-shaped hunting weapon—and threw it out into the river. The 'whit-whit' sank, and then gradually returned to the surface again. "There," said the Crow, "is the great mystery explained. We all go through another world of experience, and then return again." Now this explanation impressed all the tribes, and the great Eagle-hawk asked: "Who will volunteer to go through this other experience to test it, and see if it is possible to return again?"



Certain animals and reptile-tribes offered to go and test the experience. "Very well," said the Eagle-hawk; "but you must go through the experience of not being sensible to sight, taste, smell, touch, or hearing, and then return to us in another form."



When it became winter-time, away went all those animals and reptiles—the goanna, the 'possum, the wombat, and the snake—that crawl into holes and hollow logs and sleep during the winter months.

Next Barr-barrarie—the springtime of the year—the tribes gathered together again to wait the return of

those who were trying to solve the great mystery. At last the wombat, the goanna, the 'possum, and the snake returned, all looking half-starved.

When they showed themselves to the gathering, the Eagle-hawk said: "You have all returned in the same form as you went out, although the snake has half changed his skin."

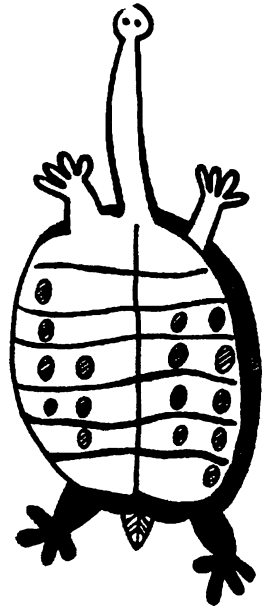
Still the gathering was anxious to solve the great mystery of death. At last the insect-tribe, the moths, the bugs, and the caterpillars, volunteered to solve the mystery of death.

All the other tribes—especially the kookaburra—laughed at this, because the insects had always been looked upon as ignorant and inferior. The insects persisted, so the Eagle-hawk gave them permission to try. But the insects did not crawl away out of sight. The water grubs asked to be wrapped in a very fine bark and thrown into the river; some asked to be placed in the bark of trees; and others asked to be placed under the ground. "Now," said the different moths, grubs, and caterpillars, "we will return at the springtime of the year in another form, and we will meet you at Parram- Pairrie, a place away from the river surrounded by high hills; a deep valley with only one entrance.

The tribes then dispersed until the following spring. When springtime approached again all the animals knew that the season was nearing by the position of the stars at night. As the time drew near there was great excitement everywhere. All the animals felt the mystery would be solved this time.

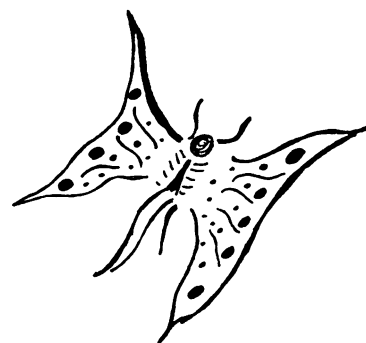
The day before the time fixed for the return of the insects the Eagle-hawk had sent out notice, and all the animals, birds, and reptiles had gathered into the Parram-Pairrie to await the great event.

That night the dragon-flies, the gnats, and fireflies came round the camp- fires as heralds of the great pageant that was to take place on the morrow. Already the trees, the shrubs, and the flowers had consented to lend themselves for the great occasion. The Dragon-fly went from camp to camp, from tribe to tribe, telling all what a great sight it was going to be, to see all the insects returning from death in their new bodies. At daybreak every animal, bird, and reptile was out to witness the pageant of new forms arrive. The wattle put forth all its wonderful yellow, the waratah its brilliant red, and all the other flowers their glorious shades. Just as the sun rose over the



tops of the hills the dragon-flies came up through the entrance of the Parram-Pairrie, leading an army of gorgeous-colored butterflies. Each color and species of butterfly came in order. First the yellow came up and showed themselves to everybody. They flew about and rested upon the trees, the wattle, and the flowers. Then came the red, the blue, the green, and right on through all the families of the butterflies. The animals were delighted. They gave cries of praise and admiration. The birds were so pleased that for the first time they broke forth into song. Everything looked at its best. When the last of the butterflies had entered the Parram-Pairrie they asked the great gathering: "Have we solved the mystery of death? Have we returned in another form?" and all Nature answered back: "You have!"

And there they can be seen at every springtime.





## BOOK REVIEWS

### MYTHS AND SYMBOLS OF VEDIC ASTROLOGY

By Bepin Behari, edited by David Frawley, Passage Press, P.O. Box 21713, Salt Lake City, UT 84121-0713, \$14.95, 278 pages.

Twenty years ago, books with titles like the above would tend to be found in the libraries of graduate students with a bent for the arcane and obscure.

Today, people of the "post-modern" Western world are turning back in unprecedented numbers to humanity's intellectual roots for meaning, understanding, and answers to life's perennial, existential questions: "Who am I?" "Does life have a purpose?" "What does it all mean?"

The prevalent anomie of "civilized" life, spawned by a scientific worldview which has placed its perpetrators outside of the natural forces of the universe as "objective observers", has brought thinkers like mythologist Joseph Campbell and psychologist C. G. Jung to the forefront of human potential theories.

Mythology, with astrology as an important component, is now being viewed as far more than a quaint, primitive attempt to understand human and cosmic existence. Rather, these tales of yore and the fantastic beings that populate them, are being afforded a respect akin to the religious. We, at the edge of various types of mass destruction, are humbly seeking from the elders of our species a deeper knowledge of psychology, metaphysics, and cosmology that may rescue us from increasingly untenable situations, personally and globally.

In this vein, Bepin Behari, widely published and well-known in India for his explorations into the esoteric/mystical levels of astrology, has produced a volume founded on the world's oldest and richest mythological tradition.

Drawing on a variety of Vedic sources (but especially the Puranas), the writings of Theosophy, and also

his own original ideas, Behari has created a lively, organic study of psycho-cosmic evolution.

Although the author is looking primarily through the windows of astrology — nine planets, 12 signs, 27 asterisms (these latter not generally a part of Western astrology) — one need not be an astrologer to enjoy this penetrating look at patterns, stages, and characteristics of human consciousness.

The pervasive interplay of Spirit and Matter, on macrocosmic and personal levels, is the dominant theme throughout, with illustrations from predictive astrology that demonstrate the practicality of understanding astrology's lexicon at these more profound levels.

At first glance, especially for the earnest student of Vedic astrology looking for predictive "tips", the book may seem to be more than one would ever want to know about the subject. But as one is allured by the subtle interweavings that the author has drawn down from the stars, *Myths and Symbols* becomes an altogether fascinating look at one of the earth's oldest manifestations of knowledge.

And along the way, Behari relates astrology to yoga, philosophy, religion, and world mythology as he tells this most ancient story, a drama in which we all can find our unique part to play, even now.

— Glenn Gerhart

### FRAGMENTS FROM H.P.B.'S MYSTICAL HISTORY

In 1883 HPB's sister wrote an article in Russian on Madame Blavatsky which was translated into English by HPB and partially used by A. P. Sinnett in his *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, HPB added some footnotes which were included in vol. 14 of the *Blavatsky Collected Writings* on pp. 476-496.

Michael Gomes who is currently at Adyar has gone over the HPBms, which is in the Adyar Archives, and has



produced a carefully edited text of the Blavatsky translation. This will be found in *The Theosophist*, Adyar, in the monthly issues of the magazine from May to November 1991.

This series is recommended to all students of the writings of Madame Blavatsky. Michael Gomes is to be thanked for his excellent and careful editing.

— John Cooper

### THE OCCULT WORLD OF MADAME BLAVATSKY

Compiled and edited by Daniel H. Caldwell, Impossible Dream Publications, P.O. Box 1844, Tucson, AZ, 85702, 1991, \$13.95

Daniel Caldwell has done us a service. In 336 pages he has collected together a great number of accounts written by people who met Blavatsky. These are presented in chronological order. These accounts include some well known stories as published in *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky* and in *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*. However, many rare items from 19th century newspapers and journals are included.

For all students of Blavatsky this is an essential book. Some of the material is so rare that I had never even heard of it.

Some 16 pages near the back of this volume contain a very valuable Blavatsky Bibliography which covers biographies, special studies, reminiscences, major attacks and their rebuttals, historical studies, major works, articles, collections and compilations and study guides to the Blavatsky and Mahatma corpus. Valuable commentaries are made on most of the writings mentioned in this paragraph.

Highly recommended.

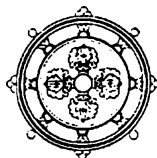
— John Cooper

## THE WILLOW IN THE TEMPEST; A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIB- ERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH OF AMERICA FROM 1917 TO 1942

By Robert Norton, published by the St. Alban Press, Ojai, 1990

This is a well written and well documented history of the period covered

in the title of this book. It clearly outlines many of the problems faced by Theosophists when they found a Liberal Catholic Church in their midst as well as the concern expressed by many of the clergy of this church when they



were brought face to face with the occult doctrines taught by Leadbeater and Wedgwood.

This book is reviewed in *The Eclectic* because it does give an insight into some aspects of the history of the Adyar Theosophical Society, and is recommended reading for all interested in religious and Theosophical history.

— John Cooper

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### REMEMBRANCE AND CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF ANDY PEOPLES

This was the title of the Memorial Service, February 22, 1992, for Dr. Anderson Peoples (November 3, 1907-February 14, 1992). The program included a reading from the Upanishads, Remembrances by friends and associates, and also by Mrs. Velona Peoples, read by the Rev. Jay Atkinson, minister of the Unitarian Church who conducted the program; Music and Silent Meditation. How well we remember Andy and his parents and family from far back earlier days in Petaluma, California, where they were active and devoted members of the T.S. Point Loma! Andy lived his Theosophy. And these four words speak for themselves. We are fortunate to have a tape of the service he gave at the Unitarian Church in 1984 on the subject of Theosophy.

Comments from Velona read by the minister, Jay Atkinson:

"To Andy life was an unending adventure. He loved children and to make life interesting and exciting for them. He could not turn his back on anyone, but always felt compelled to help when asked. He had no tolerance for the statement 'this won't work' — whether it was plumbing, lab equipment, experiments in chemistry and biology, or cutting through the red tape of bureaucracy, he generally did 'the impossible' and made it work. He lived in the present and, like his Viking ancestors, never looked back. He could always see the humorous side of life. After spending a year at Maudsley Hospital in London on a University

of London fellowship in psychiatry, he decided that teaching and research were the paths he wanted to follow. His first job was as assistant professor of Pharmacology at the University of Louisville Medical School. While he was giving his first lecture the department chairman came up the hall to investigate the waves of laughter emerging from the room. In later years, many students have told how they discovered when they took their first exam that his jokes all had a point!

If the laughter he created everywhere were turned to gold he would indeed have been a wealthy man.

I can truly say that life with Andy has been like a ride on the tail of a comet."

### IN MEMORIAM: A GREAT THEOSOPHIST

(The following is reprinted from "Reflections of a Theosophist", a bi-monthly compiled and edited by Claire Walker, 13801 York Rd., A-13, Cockeysville, MD 21030. A good many years ago we met Iris Weddell at the Olcott Library in Wheaton, TS headquarters of the American Section, Adyar TS, and found her very helpful and cooperative, and radiating good cheer. — Ed.)

"Iris Weddell White was a theosophist since 1929, a national lecturer in the 1930s and 1940s, and right into 1991 a favorite speaker in both the Baltimore and Washington Lodges. She died Dec. 2, 1991, just a few days short of 99, after a fall following a happy family visit back in Chicago over Thanksgiving.

"A portrait artist with a gift for faces, Iris studied at the Chicago Art Insti-



tute and continued as a life member after she moved to Washington D.C. A few years ago she made free-hand chalk drawings of Isis, Demeter, and Mary to illustrate her talk in Baltimore on "Three Mothers", and that side of the Lodge blackboard has never been erased since.

"Iris assisted in the Olcott Library for many years, in the course of which she came to know personally early T.S. leaders, including American Section presidents. Her daughter Julia Rogers, who is another favorite in both Washington and Baltimore, said of her mother: "The basics of Theosophy were built into the marrow of her bones. But for Iris, growing was a never-ending thing. She didn't want to be a mathematical ignoramus in her next life, she said, so in the summer of 1991 she was busy studying algebra!"

### LACTS PROGRAMS

The Los Angeles Center for Theosophic Studies invites the public to a free series of special Monday evening presentations at the Hollywood Theosophic Center, 2560 N. Beachwood Dr. Lectures of January through April: Sacrifice and Suffering, by John T. Coker, a Pasadena TS member; The Art, Symbols and Mysteries of Ancient Mexico, by Martin Liederman (with slides); The Ground Under our Feet: The Role of the Paramitas on the



Spiritual Path, by Brett Forray, President of LACTS. The February meeting was a forum: Ethics of Theosophic Philosophy, discussing fundamental propositions and evaluating the ethics which emerge from them in our day to day lives.

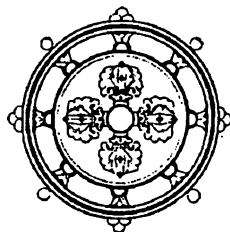
### INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

As our Readers know this will have been held at Point Loma, California, on the former grounds of the TS there, now occupied by the Point Loma Nazarene College. In our next issue we hope to give a fuller report. But it seems that the word "International" is to be emphasized, as we note speakers from Australia (John Cooper, though *in absentia*); England (Jean Overton Fuller); Canada (John Oliphant); Gregory Tillett (again, Australia); The Netherlands (Henk J. Spierenburg, *in absentia*) and from the USA, Paul Johnson, Robert Ellwood,

J. Gordon Melton, Jerry Hejka-Ekins, Dwayne Little, and also the convener, James A. Santucci, Editor of *Theosophical History*, and a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at California State University, Fullerton, California.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO POINT LOMA PUBLICATIONS

PLP Board is very grateful for contributions recently received in response to a General Letter sent out May 1, 1992. These have come from England, Sweden, Canada, France, and the U.S.A. They are all a great help. Our warm thanks go to each of these individuals who wish to remain anonymous.



## AND OF BOOKS...

### DEITY, COSMOS AND MAN

by Geoffrey A. Farthing, Director Blavatsky Trust, and a former General Secretary of the Theosophical Society, (Adyar), England. Chapter titles give some idea of the broad scope of this important study: 1. About Esoteric Science; 2. The Scope and Framework of Man and Cosmos; 3. The Occult Constitution of Man and Cosmos; 4. The Hierarchies of Being; 5. Akasha and the Astral Light; 6. Elements and Elementals; 7. Law in Cosmos and Human Life; 8. Death and Rebirth; 9. Origins; 10. Globes, Rounds and Races; 11. Ever-Becoming — The Processes of Evolution; 12. Spiritualism and Psychism; 13. Spiritual Development; 14. Religion.

It is hoped to have this published by the end of 1992.

### THE VEDANTA COMMENTARIES OF H. P. BLAVATSKY

compiled and annotated by H. J. Spierenburg. Work is progressing steadily on this, writes Dr. Spierenburg, and our readers will be kept informed. This is the third of the series. The first was *The New Testament Commentaries of H. P. Blavatsky*; the second, *The Buddhism of H. P. Blavatsky*. About this third volume of the series, we quote Dr. Spierenburg: "I have decided to include some of the writings of H.P.B.'s former co-worker, the Brahman T.

Subba Row (1856-1890), who, according to H.P.B., was the best authority in India on the esotericism of Advaita Vedanta. Since they both were pupils of the same teacher, viz. the Master M., their teachings about Vedanta stem from the same source and, therefore, complement each other."

*Received From Daniel Caracostea, Societé Theosophique de France, a complementary copy of a biography,*

### HELENA P. BLAVATSKY OU LA RÉPONSE DU SPHINX

by Noel Richard-Nafarre, 640 pages illustrated, with 26 pages of Chapter Notes. This is a work of thorough research and accuracy. The author expresses thanks to M. Michel Caracostea for wise counsel and a careful editing of historical notes concerning the Theosophical Society. If we get the Introduction translated by a friend we hope to share it with *Eclectic* readers.

### DE WIJSHEID VAN HET HART (THE WISDOM OF THE HEART)

by Katherine Tingley, translated into Dutch by Point Loma Publications/The Netherlands (Arabistlaan 91, 255 DJ The Hague). They also publish: *Wat De Dood Werkelijk Is (What Death Really Is)* (G. de Purucker), and will soon have his *Wind of the Spirit* available.

## THE ECLECTIC THEOSOPHIST

Now available:

### BOUND ECLECTICS

Vol. I	#1-43	March 1971— Nov. 1977
Vol. II	#44-84	Jan. 1978— Nov.—Dec. 1984
Vol. III	#85-126	Jan.—Feb. 1985— Nov.—Dec. 1991
Vols. I & II		\$15.00 each;
Vol. III		\$18.00
For the 3 volumes		\$45.00

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For these please check your address label. If you move, changes of address must be received 4 weeks in advance of issue date to ensure getting your next copy on time. We are not responsible for delays in the Post Office's forwarding of mail.

Point Loma Publications, Inc.  
P.O. Box 6507  
San Diego, CA 92166



### THREE STEPS TO INFINITY

Gordon Plummer informs us that he is nearing completion of this his seventh book. Chapter titles tell the story: 1) Three Universal Constants; 2) Cosmic Rhythms in Logarithms; 3) The Divine Proportion; 4) Divine Geometry (and an Interlude: Magic Squares; About Pi and Epsilon); 5) The Inner Structure of the Number 7; 6) The Earth Chain; 7) The Hierarchy of Compassion. Readers will be kept informed of further progress.

*And see our last Eclectic, p. 21, announcement of*

### THE OCCULT WORLD OF MADAME BLAVATSKY

(compiled with notes by Daniel Caldwell, Impossible Dream Publications). Incorrect zip number was given. Correct address is: P.O. Box 1844, Tucson, Arizona 85702. (Error causes delay in postal deliveries).

### INDIAN CHELAS ON THE MASTERS.

I. Damodar K. Mavalankar; II. Bhavani Shankar; III. S. Ramaswamier; IV. R. Casava

Pillai; V. Mohini M. Chatterji; VI. G. Soobiah Chetty. With Appendix, a letter from H. P. Blavatsky, from Esoteric Section, 17 Lansdowne Road, Kensington, London, November 29, 1889; and a Note on the Masters. A booklet, 42 pages, obtainable for \$3.00. Write: Michael Gomes, Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras 600020, India. In a future issue we hope to quote his Foreword and also H.P.B.'s Letter.

### PORPHYRY ON THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS,

Translated by Thomas Taylor, reviewed in our Spring quarterly issue, p. 7, failed to state that it is published by Phanes Press (P.O. Box 6115, Grand Rapids, MI 49516). Orders should be sent direct to them.

### THEOSOPHY IN AUSTRALIA, MARCH 1992

Opens with "The Silent Speaker" an article by Edward Abidill (of New York), headed by these lines of Christmas Humphrey:

Empty the mind and let the teeming void  
In silence speak. Be still and let the dearth  
Of sound and sight be fruitfully employed.  
Empty the mind of all that men of earth,  
With choice and valuation, fretful thought,  
Self-laden aspiration, use to fill  
The corridors of being and with wrought  
Impediment frustrate the teeming will.

Empty the mind, and life, pure life, shall flow

Unsuited with the day's duality  
Till utterly the true heart-mind shall know,  
Nor fear, the void of full totality

The author makes telling references to *The Voice of Silence*, and says in conclusion: "To transform oneself, to become the Path, to realize the One, is no easy task. It is not the work of a few days. It is the very purpose of human evolution itself. Impossible though it may seem, it can be done. The only real enemy lies within us, disguised as our own selfish ego. Can we do it? Can we chip away at that ego and merge with the impersonal SELF? Try, says the Master."

Also in this issue "Changes to Section Structure" of the TS in Australia are outlined, affecting heavily the National President and the National Secretary, and a sharing of their burdens and responsibilities. We note also the passing of one of Eclectic's long subscribers, Gordon Limbrick, a wellknown lecturer and writer. Also "A Theosophical Pilgrimage" is of fascinating interest.

### THE THEOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

This is the official journal of the TS in England. Its 20 pages in the May-June issue is soundly packed with pertinent articles and information. The article "Where Darwin Went

Wrong" by Jack Patterson, former Gen. Sec. of the New Zealand Section is especially important, as well as "Evolution: Blavatsky vs. Darwin" by Laura McDonald; while "Evolution: The Cosmic Panorama" will draw students to hear Harold Tarn, May 1 and June 5, who examines modern theories of evolution and assesses the degree of common ground they share with theosophical doctrine. From 8-10 May a special Blavatsky Commemorative Program was presented at the Section Headquarters, 50 Gloucester Place, the theme: "H.P. Blavatsky and the Revolution in Consciousness". And at the Blavatsky Trust Headquarters the theme for the weekend of June 12-14 was Theosophy and Science Today.

### DAMODAR, A THEOSOPHICAL EPIC

This is the title of the main contents of *The High Country Theosophist*, of February 1992, (editor Richard A. Slusser, 140 S. 33rd St., Boulder, Colo. 80303). Gives quotes from Damodar's diary. Well worth reading.

As we go to press the May issue of HCT has arrived leading with an answer to an important question on the four Yugas from G. de P.'s *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, pp. 40-43. There is also much about HCT's Outreach Project, giving letters from recipients in Africa; and "Pilgrimage to India" continues.

## FROM LETTERS RECEIVED

### COMMENTS ON NEW QUARTERLY "ECLECTIC"

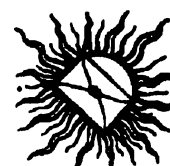
Len Marlieb, Miami, Florida: To borrow a W.Q. Judge title, once again The ET has "Hit the Mark"...Thank you for being there and best for the New Birth!

Dara Eklund, Studio City, Calif.:...how impressed we are with the new *Eclectic Theosophist*...We note that the policy as stated by associate editor John Cooper keeps with the Point Loma tradition's Universal Idealism. The format is lovely yet modest, and we are glad to still find views from other students around the country and the world.

Brett Forray, Glendale, Calif.:...the new quarterly "Eclectic Theosophist", what a wonderful new look. My hat off to all of you for a lovely production...This is one of the more valuable Theosophic journals.

Mark Jaqua, Napoleon, Ohio: The articles are all really Superb. Every once in a while a bell goes off in my head that "this is EX-CEPTIONAL!" and both the Morris and Sangharakshita articles I thought are in this

class...It was good to see Humphreys say those things about Neo-Theosophy, and Laudahn is certainly one of the best and most original Theosophical writers today. John Cooper in his excellent *Buddhism of H. P. Blavatsky* review might have pointed out that HPB wasn't responsible for most of the *Glossary*, so the error pointed out in it might not be hers. Zirkoff had an article in *Theosophia* on it. — But I don't "like" Cooper's editorial in that it is being compromising to the Neo-Theosophy bunch. Progressive?!, but he says "which by some can be called progressive."... My own attitude is to praise the Neo-crowd when they do something good, but not to compromise on the harm they do on the Doctrines. To ramble more on the Editorial: There is no strongly felt opinion expressed in it. The "Point Loma" perspective is expressed on equal ground with other "perspectives". But you might look at Cooper's letter in *Eclectic* #97 (Jan.-Feb. 1987) where he says: "Are we really looking for truth rather than wanting to feel comfortable? It is all too easy to look back with lofty tolerance on past Theosophists and murmur to ourselves, and to others, that of course it was only their opinion. Yet in maintaining this



viewpoint we, ourselves, are maintaining an attitude and an opinion."

Judith Ann Christie, Yerington, Nevada: The content is very good, the layout excellent. In my mind I was thinking an A- until I read (which I left until the last) "The Adventures of Don Quixote" by Kenneth Morris. That brought the whole thing to a fully dimensional entity...I would like 12 copies of this issue.

G. Rohde, Lakeside, Calif.: I like the new *Eclectic*, the new format, and especially the articles by Sangharakshita and Christmas Humphreys whom I venerate. Also the editorial by John Cooper was very well written. I still get along, with some difficulties, with the article of Laudahn, because I too am a Neo-Platonist, a classical scholar, but he should have mentioned that Neoplatonism came from



Egypt and India. Has he never read about the missionary monks of Emperor Ashoka? He also seems to have trouble with our Mahatmas (Arhats rather), and the fact that HPB was officially a Buddhist! O well, one has to be tolerant!

Wane Kell, Calabasas, Calif.: It looks fine and has some very good articles, with the exception, strangely of John Cooper's — with whose premises I cannot agree... He writes from the historical and academic point of view. Which is all very well, but in Theosophy there is also the heart quality. No amount of intellectual isolation or "detachment," or "analysis" of the surface of things will ever capture that. It is all very interesting, as one might survey a countryside from a peak nearby, but what makes the country "tick?"...

His three-fold division of the theosophical field appears to me to be a curious one: 1. fundamentalists, 2. progressives, and 3. middleers.

Fundamentalists: These may be said to be a group to whom the study of what HPB and the Masters brought to our attention is found to be so vast, so interesting, so difficult to really understand and to adopt, that they are still probing and testing, trying with all their attention to demonstrate to themselves the value of those statements. Many of these are impatient with the two other "kinds," feeling that this is a "side-issue," and possibly a denigration of the true intent of the Masters to get humanity to act in a brotherly fashion...

The second category he speaks of are of those who brought "later revelations," and who may be termed "progressives". If what they offer is right and correct, then it will be *in line* with HPB and Master's Theosophy. All that we know about Theosophy has come from them...

The third group — the "middleers" should be that group that serves as a fulcrum, or a point of balance, to two extremes. But as we are all looking at Nature, it is we who need to fit ourselves in one way or another into an attitude of "student" — desiring to know, to learn, to prove, or of being a kind

of Theosophical dilettante wanderer, a nomad, testing at this plate and that cup... of the many offerings made to secure his attention. Again, this can only be called "sensation satisfying", not that which ignites the mind and incites to deeper considerations...[Refers then to the past when W. Q. Judge had written the pamphlet *The Epitome of Theosophy*, and the English publishers thought it too advanced and wanted it simplified, and WQJ reads of this "with great regret", states that "the opinion is erroneous, and the policy weak as well as being out of accord with that of the Masters... We are not seeking to cater to a lot of fiction readers and curiosity hunters, but to the pressing needs of earnest minds...I therefore respectfully urge upon you that the weak and erroneous policy to which I have referred shall not be followed, but that strong lines of action be taken..."...The wise counsels of Mr. Judge, fortified by the advice of Madame Blavatsky, prevailed with the TPS, and the *Epitome* was issued in the summer of 1888...]

The Theosophical Movement is not a structure at all. It is already here. It pervades the entire world and our Universe. It is, quite simply, the WHOLE. Those who discover, or develop an understanding, of sections, divisions, structures, relationships and interactions, etc., need to integrate their specialties with the others. Theosophy is the great resolvent, the Alkahest, that which unifies all...

Pervin Mistry, Mississauga, Canada: I found it hard in the first few minutes to accept that this new magazine was the same *Eclectic*, merely transformed. I thought the colors, images, designs would sway my concentration. But once I accepted the fact that it was a continuation of the same *Eclectic* I had so eagerly awaited in the past, and I accepted, I began to read. Guess what? I liked it, and I accepted the change. I liked every single article, and I wish the new magazine success for years to come. May it always remain "Eclectic" and carry on in the footsteps of the old *Eclectic* from which it has emerged.

Jan Molijn, Bilthoven, Holland: Your *Eclectic* in its new disguise, how very professional it looks and is with its attractive cover. Especially happy to read Helen's profound article on Swabhava.

Brian Taves, Washington, D.C.: The newly designed *Eclectic* arrived, and it is extremely impressive, a marvelous job.

John Cooper, Bega, NSW, Australia: Bhikku Sangharakshita is well known as the founder of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and his biography *The Thousand Petalled Lotus*, Heinemann, London, 1976, is a superb study of his life in India as a Buddhist. He is the author of a number of excellent books on Buddhism.

Christmas Humphries presents a problem to me. With his work in Theosophy I have no quarrel. However his writings on Buddhism have been labelled "Christmas Humphries Buddhism" and have been overtaken by the number of outstanding commentaries and translations that are appearing. It is the same with Evans-Wentz. His editing of some of the Buddhist books that have come out under his name show more a Hindu than a Buddhist approach.

What is needed is for Theosophists to become aware of the excellent works now available to students in the areas of Buddhism, Hinduism, Gnosticism and other religions.

Rob Zuk, Brampton, Canada: Thank you for sending your new quarterly journal. Your efforts and perseverance have certainly achieved new dimensions and horizons. The items of interest, and review of books, and selections from letters received all inform Theosophists around the world generally as to what is going on and available. Keep these simple, as they say! It's good to see that the Tradition following Blavatsky lives on and that the SD is still the basic text. You are keeping the Tradition alive, and we will keep it going. Thank you for keeping one part of the "wheel" in place to go along with the other parts as well!

## THE FORWARD MOVING CYCLE — AND THE LAST YEARS OF THE CENTURY

Willy Schmit

The instances are legion in which H.P.B. stressed the importance of the last years of each century, because they are the end of a cycle. During these years everything moves quickly. So, if we could succeed in achieving some good in a joint exertion, the next cycle will

profit by it; exactly NOW, during these years. For a period of ten years is a cycle, as is a period of 25, 250, 500, 700 or 1000 years.

"It is now some time since this theory, [of cycles] which was first propounded in the oldest religion of the world, Vedaism, then taught by various Greek philosophers, and afterwards defended by the Theosophists of the Middle Ages, but which came to be flatly denied by the *wise men* of the West, like every-

thing else, in this world of negation, has been gradually coming into prominence again."

— BCW II, 418; "The Theory of Cycles"

What is the cause of cycles? It has to do with the archetype of all things, the circle; so our Universe is rounded in conformation, and "because it is filled full of countless forms of forces all at work; and because force is substantial, force and matter being fundamentally

one; and because force and matter are inseparable by nature: therefore all the many forms of force or energy follow pathways or lines of least resistance... Hence, all pathways of force or energy, or lines of least resistance, follow curved paths, because the Universe itself is of rounded or global type... [However], although the forces in the Universe of necessity follow in operations the conformation of such Universe, nevertheless it is the Universe itself which is the product of or builded of and from these Forces, and not *vice versa*."

(*The Esoteric Tradition*, I, 395)

In other words, the Universe is these forces and forms, as the human body is the form or envelope of all kinds of forces in us.

As Theosophy comprises a *system* of doctrines, so the varied doctrines cannot be considered separately; they constitute a unity, being the description of Nature itself. So too, the doctrine of Cycles cannot be separated from the doctrine of Evolution, the doctrine of the unfoldment of that which is enclosed within. When studying, there is one thing made clear to us: that nowhere in Nature is there stagnation, everything is always on the move, on its way to wider vistas. In the recognition and realization of that there is great joy.

Returning to the importance of the end of every century, we find in *The Secret Doctrine*: "Cyclic Evolution and Karma." (I, 634), an important exposition, very suggestive in its description of the destiny of man and the threads he is weaving, "as a spider does his web."

It is with the spiritual evolution of the inner, immortal man that the occult sciences are occupied, for, as HPB states elsewhere, "We are outwardly creatures of but a day; within we are eternal." (BCW XII, 156).

All these articles, in which the subject of cycles is brought to the fore, have been written between 1880 and 1890. In this connection H.P.B. mentions the figures *eight* and *nine*, which indicate cosmic as well as human changes. The number 8, dreaded by all the Caesars

and World-potentates, because it postulates the equality of all men. If perfect as a cosmic number it is likewise the symbol of the lower Self, the animal nature of man. "And *nine* was a digit terribly dreaded by the ancients. With them it was a symbol of great changes, cosmic and social, and of versatility, in general; the sad emblem of the fragility of human things..." (BCW XII, 68; "On the New Year's Morrow")

The decade just begun has two nines; a double acceleration we may state, and we are able to observe the truth of her words around us. We witness very fast changes, with which we are confronted everywhere.

From the same year, 1890, dates her article "Why the 'Vahan'?" (BCW XII, 417-19). The name "Vahan" (vehicle) she gave to a periodical, distributed freely among the British Branches and "unattached" Fellows, in order to keep all the Fellows in touch with the London Lodge and *au courant* with Theosophical events. She says: "For, to merit the honorable title of Theosophist one must be an altruist, above all; one ever ready to help equally foe or friend, to act, rather than to speak; and urge others to action, while never losing an opportunity to work himself."

She continues:

"If you would really help the noble cause — you must do so now: for, a few years more and your, as well as our efforts, will be in vain."

She speaks of the impetus of two mutually antagonistic and destroying Forces, the one striving to move Humanity onward, toward Spirit, the other forcing Mankind to gravitate downward, into the very abysses of matter. She warns her readers that between 1897 and 1898 the first 5,000 years of Kali-yuga will be ended — Kali-yuga, the "Black Age", as she says.

*What is the cause of cycles? It has to do with the archetype of all things, the circle; so our Universe is rounded in conformation*

Over and over she mentions these conflicting forces and that we have to decide where to stand. Not an easy task, to be sure, attached too much as we are to the material things of life. Her words cannot be misinterpreted:

"Unless we succeed in placing the T.S. before this date on the safe side of the spiritual current, it will be swept away irretrievably into the Deep called 'Failure', and the cold waves of oblivion will close over its doomed head."



Perusing the history of the Theosophical Movement, we may ascertain that her warning remains valid. Also the following words ask for our full attention, again because they are so very relevant to our own time. She speaks of the *only* association whose aims, rules and original purposes answer in every particular and detail — *if strictly carried out* — to the innermost, fundamental thought of every great Adept Reformer, the beautiful dream of a Universal Brotherhood of Man.

"Verily, of philanthropical, political and religious bodies we have many... But which of them is strictly *universal*, good for all and prejudicial to none?... None, we say, none save our own Society, a purely unsectarian, unselfish body; the only one which has no party object in view, which is open to all men, the good and the bad, the lowly and the high, the foolish and the wise — and which calls them all 'Brothers', regardless of their religion, race, color, or station in life."

In another article, "The New Cycle," she writes about the last years of the century during which a mystic force is rising from the depths of the dark, muddy waters of materiality that has



been "the dominant tone and keynote of every century — *absolute freedom of thought for humanity.*" (BCW XI, 123)

How true and hopeful are these last words! We are able to follow the trend of this mystic force when we watch the history at the end of each century. Some instances: the end of the 15th century; discovery of America; the end of the 18th century: the French Revolution. And there is the life and work of individuals who have brought about great changes in human thought; Paracelsus, Saint-Germain, Cagliostro, Mesmer, and not to forget: H.P. Blavatsky. They have all worked for freedom of thought.

H.P.B. in her article: "Our Cycle and the Next" (BCW XI, 202), of 1889, asks herself what the new cycle has in store for humanity — "merely a continuation of the present, only in darker and more terrible colors? Or shall a new day dawn for mankind, a day of pure sunlight, of truth, of charity, of true happiness for all? The answer depends mainly on the few Theosophists who, true to their colors through good repute and ill, still fight the battle of Truth against the powers of Darkness...For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize" — she continues — "that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.

"But if not, then the storm will burst, and our boasted Western civilization and enlightenment will sink in such a sea of horror that its parallel History has never yet recorded."

In her article "Recent Progress in Theosophy" (BCW XII, 308) of 1890 she says:

"For many a long year the 'great orphan,' Humanity, has been crying aloud in the darkness for guidance and for light. Amid the increasing splendors of progress purely material, of a science that nourished the intellect, but

left the spirit to starve, Humanity, dimly feeling its origin and presaging its destiny, has stretched out towards the East empty hands that only a *spiritual* philosophy can fill. Aching from the divisions, the jealousies, the hatreds, that rend its very life, it has cried for some sure foundation on which to build the solidarity it senses, some metaphysical basis from which its loftiest social ideals may rise secure. Only the Masters of the Eastern wisdom can set that foundation, can satisfy at once the intellect and the spirit, can guide Humanity safely through the night to 'the dawn of a larger day.'

Such is the goal which Theosophy has set itself to attain; such is the history of the modern movement; such is the work which Theosophy has already accomplished in this nineteenth century."

All these words indicate a great earnestness and deep concern for the destiny of mankind. Repeatedly she speaks of the two paths — the one leading upwards to the realms of Light, and the other, leading downwards. There is no other possibility. H.P.B. speaks unremittingly of the *ethics* of Theosophy and the practice of altruism, implying that the acceptance of the idea of Universal Brotherhood is the only prerequisite for membership.

In her third Letter to the American Convention (BCW XII, 156) she urges the members to study well "the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, and teach, practice, promulgate that system of life and thought which alone can save the coming races. Do not work merely for the Theosophical Society, but *through* it for Humanity." In that letter she stipulates that the Ethics of Theosophy are more important than any divulgement of psychic laws and facts.

*It is our work to change the hearts of the people by changing their thoughts; give them ideas and ideals to follow and for which they can live*

Dr. G. de Purucker stresses the great importance of ideas and the fostering of ideals:

"What the world needs today are great, humanitarian ideals, in which it can believe and which it can follow trustingly. Ideals of a constructive character, something that gives hope and the conviction that this world is morally led, morally inspired, by the spiritual forces of Nature, and that it is not merely a happening, having its source in a far past when by chance a nebula began to rotate in a void and finally, after many aeons, produced us, creatures of a day, in order to die finally in nothingness. Western science has taught us that we are only a higher kind of animal, soulless, irresponsible.

"Teach men that the universe is essentially and fundamentally guided and governed by irrefutable Law and destiny, ethical, moral in essence and that it is not merely a mad phantasmagoria, a danse macabre, without sense or aim or purpose. That is what millions of people in the West believe today, that is what they think they believe. Self-interest has become the only guide in life. The result? Everybody for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Therein lies the difficulty: false teachings, false convictions, stupidity and the pathetic picture of noble human beings, lead by ideas and ideals indeed, but of which kind?

"Our civilization as a whole has lost its religious instinct of unity with inner guidance, it has no philosophy, it is unguided, blind, nearly helpless and yet pathetically crying and asking after the cause, as a child in the night, crying helplessly.

"It is our work to change the hearts of the people by changing their thoughts; give them ideas and ideals to follow and for which they can live. Working without malignity to none, the desire to do justice to all, even to those with whom we disagree most."

He also has pointed out to us the importance of altruism:

"Human nature is so prone, when hearing of altruism, or reading of it, to think it is something alien to us,

something that is very desirable to follow, but that in the long run is impractical and therefore cannot be put in practice, that it is not intrinsic to the characteristics of human creatures to be altruistic by nature. Wherever we look, whatever we consider or study, we perceive that the individual working for himself only is helpless; wherever we look in all the great kingdoms of the cosmos we see

unity of effort, cooperation, in communities. When we consider nature in all its kingdoms we find unity in working, accomplished by hosts of individuals working together for a common purpose. And what else is this than altruism? We are all children of the universe, of the physical and the spiritual and of the divine side of it. Is it not the utmost time that we as Theosophists give to the world some

of the simple inner teachings of the GOD-WISDOM of the Ancients? Ethics above all!"

After all it is Theosophy that teaches us to think cosmically, and so we are raised from our petty thoughts, realizing that we are in truth at home in the Universe.

And if anyone asks us from where does the evil in the world originate, we can answer in truth: there is no other evil in the world than that caused by man himself. As Theosophists we are bound to help remove ignorance, for ignorance is the greatest evil of all. And we too—nearly of the 21st century—may rightly ask ourselves: What will the New Cycle bring?

# ॐ सतिदयज्ञं ॐ सतिदयज्ञं

*Continued from page 2*

The result is loss of touch with the place of origination and the ability for the Divine to touch ground and bring life to a true center. Hence alienation, despair, and an existential vacuum of a materially successful yet spiritually exhausted society. Could each of us pay homage to our origin, to the meaningful source of our lives, we would enter the current of wholeness where power no longer drives or burdens, but liberates and opens us and society to a creative sharing of "the nature of the world". So, to rediscover, literally to re-source to the heart of the sacred, underlying ourselves and our Movement, is the challenge of the present times. Look and see, is there any barrier too fearful to engage, or any question of challenge too difficult to raise? This is the daily, moment to moment challenge of consciousness. It is indeed, a courageous sifting necessary to manifest such authentic power.

What are some of the barriers and "danger/opportunities" within the Theosophical and many Spiritual Movements today that need full, honest dialogue and debate with a view to restructuring?

Organizational democracy and teacher/student co-dependency.

The problem of externalizing Spiritual truth often into a product for sale, losing sight of the interior nature and genuine purpose of the teaching.

The need to apply the 'perennial wisdom' to the needs of the current times and generate the compassion to create and restructure outmoded forms to meet these needs....e.g. the need for new innovative centers, schools, communities and methods of communication that reflect this Tradition as well as the radical changes needed in those organizations already established to effectively meet the world of today.

An open, honest, creative dialogue leading to new ways of work and practice. etc...

Pausing and viewing the world scene, we can now sense a new vision

*Could each of us pay homage to our origin, to the meaningful source of our lives, we would enter the current of wholeness where power no longer drives or burdens, but liberates and opens us and society to a creative sharing of "the nature of the world"*

dawning and feel indeed that "...there is the wind of the spirit blowing over the earth, rearranging, remaking, reshaping."\* For an understanding of how to approach this 'sacred wind' the following Sufi story (version retold by dePurucker) comes to mind:

"The story-tale runs as follows: '...a soul once came to the portals of the House of God and knocked. And the voice of God issued therefrom in tones of reverberating thunder: "Who knocks? And the soul answered, 'I'; and the same thundering volume of sound again issued from the crypts of the House of God, saying 'Who is I !I know thee not.' And the soul turned sadly away and wandered for ages and ages, and finally having learned its lesson through suffering and experience, it returned to the House of God, and again knocked. Again came the thunderous volume of sound, 'Who knocks?' And the soul answered, 'Thou knockest.' And then a whisper, inaudible to the ears, yet filling all the spaces—the whisper of truth—issued forth from the Temple of God, and said: 'Enter into thine own, for we are One.'"

Kenneth Small

\*Wind of the Spirit, by G. de Purucker p.2

port that allow Mundy's didactic teaching and philosophy to win acceptance.

*Om* opens with a fascinating panorama of India, as a seemingly inevitable series of bizarre incidents grow into a tempest on the streets, triggering an accidental roadside pile-up—a vivid, materialized depiction of the same Karmic law of cause and effect that also governs the souls of Mundy's characters. Mixed with these events is the news that Cotswold Ommony, a character familiar from previous novels and about to make his final appearance, has left his forest and enters a European club. He is utterly unlike the standard depictions of British colonials by other writers, leaving behind the stereotypical confines of such a character. Ommony is not just curious, he is a student, an explorer of the east and its traditions, willing to learn. As one who believes the British should leave India, he is an outcast from his own race.

Ommony is also a believer in native magic, who has encountered a mysterious, broken piece of jade that reflects its observer's thoughts. He seeks the answer to the riddles it poses in a nearby jeweler's shop. There he meets a lama, Tsiang Samdup, and Samding, his chela (student). The encounter confirms Ommony's desire to seek the mysteries of which he has learned so many tantalizing fragments, as well as solve the disappearance of his sister into the inaccessible Ahbor Valley two decades earlier.

These threads grow into the principal subplots along Ommony's journey: the mystical lama and his chela, the search for Ommony's sister, and the pursuit of the jade. All these elements fuse in one direction leading to Ommony's discovery of a philosophy, labeled here as "the middle way," to credibly explain that most profound of questions, the mystery of life. Like theosophy itself, the middle way eclectically incorporates the best of both philosophy and religion, avoiding the pitfalls of extremes. The middle way exercised by the lama proves to be not only a philosophy practiced by the lama,

but also a material road for secret communication, a type of "underground railroad," secret paths in India which open, close and change constantly, through which the actors pass furtively from town to town. It is only these scenes, some of which seem rather protracted and slow, that cause the novel and its pace to sag during the long trek in the center of the book.

The final chapters, inside the Ahbor Valley as Ommony hears the Lama's remarkable story, become Mundy's long and philosophical essay, of a type he had never had an opportunity to write before. Ultimately Ommony faces the entire jade of the Ahbors himself. Actually the jade is part of a scientific instrument made by the savants of a long-forgotten ancient race, to reflect the best and worst traits of whomever looks in it, forcing them to undergo a trial of self-revelation. Then Ommony is sent out into the world once more to face his destiny. As Mundy wrote in one of the proverbs in *Om*, "He who would understand the Plains must ascend the Eternal Hills, where a man's eyes scan Infinity. But he who would make use of understanding must descend on to the Plains, where Past and Future meet and men have need of him."

*He who would understand the Plains must ascend the Eternal Hills, where a man's eyes scan Infinity. But he who would make use of understanding must descend on to the Plains, where Past and Future meet and men have need of him*

"No learning is of any value unless we can translate it into action," the lama says, and "Hope lives in action."

Unlike some Mundy books, in *Om* characterization is definitely a strength, with a fascinating array of vibrant, authentic individuals splashed across its pages. As Austin Adams wrote, Mundy's *Om* more than withstood comparison with Joseph Conrad, rank-

ing *Om* alongside E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, finding that Mundy paints "his portraits of real people...almost as convincingly..." As well as the pivotal trio of Ommony, Samdup and Samding, *Om* also offers the jeweler Chuttur Chand, Benjamin, schoolmistress Hannah Sanburn, Sirdar Sirohe Singh, the roguish Dawa Tsering, even Ommony's dog Diana, all memorable, indeed unforgettable portrayals "like the melodies we still remember and hear long after the music has stopped." Mundy's Indians are incredibly diverse; he spins an endless web of such figures, all equally vivid and arresting — whether the wise lama, the bloodthirsty and duplicitous Tsering, the double agent Singh, or the nervous but knowing merchants Chand and Benjamin.

Ommony's companion back to India will be Samding, revealed to be his niece, the daughter of his late, long-lost sister. Samding has been protected and reared all these years by Samdup as foster-father and teacher. Since she was born in the Ahbor Valley, the natives exact the price of Samdup's life when Samding departs, a sacrifice the lama willingly makes. Ommony, in turn, is to become Samding's chela, assisting and protecting her as she brings wisdom to the west. However, Samding is not, as some interpretations have suggested, a "savior," but merely a wise teacher, one of many who will be needed to convey Oriental wisdom to the Occident. In *Om* both cultures must be brought together, and Samding has the unique combination of a westerner reared in the east—qualifications Mundy hints will be required for the wisdom of the East to be transmitted to the occidental world. Similarly, the westerner H.P. Blavatsky was said to have learned from the "Masters" in Tibet to receive the inspiration to found Theosophy, and the idea of such a figure as Samding was likely based on this conception. (Samding has nothing in common with Krishnamurti, then being prepared as a world teacher in India by Tingley's theosophical rival, Annie Besant.) As



well, Samding is a woman, like so many of Mundy's teachers—H.P. Blavatsky, Katherine Tingley and Mary Baker Eddy. The novel's visit to the mission school at Tilguan is clearly modeled on Tingley's own Raja-Yoga principles of education in the society's academy at Point Loma.

Many Point Loma theosophists thought they recognized Tingley's own teachings in the Lama's sayings and character. Indeed, Mundy acknowledged the debt to Tingley when he wrote, "What wisdom [Om] contains was learned from you, and its unwisdom is my own. Without your teaching, patience, and encouragement I could not have 'imagined' either the wise old Lama or his chela." In the words of Pervin Mistry, Katherine Tingley does "stand out as the figure of the Lama in *Om*. She represents the character of the wise old Lama for she had all those qualities herself. But it is also true that just as the Lama teaches his audience through plays, analogy and sayings, Mundy himself plays the very role of Tsiang Samdup as personified by his own qualities and innate wisdom. It would have been impossible to create the Lama and the Chela as 'living characters' as Mundy has portrayed them to perfection, if he himself did not possess their qualities." As well, Mundy used such characters as the Lama in novels both before and after his association with Tingley.

In *Om*, Mundy is using and vastly enlarging the archetypal character of the wise old sage who had appeared in *Caves of Terror* two years previously. The Ringding Gelong Lama Tsiang Samdup of *Om* is far more likable than the Gray Mahatma of *Caves of Terror*; Samdup is wise yet whimsical, compassionate, perceptive, humble, a man of incomparable serenity even when facing death. Mundy based the character of his lama on the wise teachings he learned at Point Loma and elsewhere over the years, but also on the Lamas he had met and seen while in India. To Mundy the lama was a living individual; he later told his last wife,

Dawn, that when he was half through with the first draft, suddenly Tsiang Samdup came to see him. Samdup "seemed to be whisking through a wall, and standing in front of him. 'He just looked at me,' Talbot said, and said 'My son, that won't do.' Talbot dropped the manuscript and put a fresh piece of paper in".

*Drama is the way to teach...By allegories, parables and illustrations men learn easily what no amount of argument will drive into their understanding*

The Lama's instruction in the middle way is partly didactic, but more often by example. In the words of the lama, "Drama is the way to teach...By allegories, parables and illustrations men learn easily what no amount of argument will drive into their understanding." By contrast, the British police only understand enough of the Lama's play to claim it is seditious. Ommony, in disguise, follows the Lama as he leads a theatrical caravan toward Tibet, performing small plays wherever they go. In this way philosophical lessons are taught by the Lama to the audience in the form of stories. Not only is this a reflexive analogy on Mundy's part for the role of his own tales as conduits and illustrations for teaching philosophy, it is the most successful form he ever devised to convey abstract ideas and thought in a comprehensible and practical manner—while still managing to entertain. Mundy's narrative strategy proved fruitful: he "succeeded brilliantly in making philosophy the very life-blood of a most absorbing story..." More effectively than in any of his other work, Mundy struck a delicate, unique balance between the descriptive, the narrative and the didactic, while still retaining the guise of the storyteller.

The Lama's technique may have been inspired by Katherine Tingley's own theatrical background and presentation of widely attended and critically

praised performances of Ancient and Shakespearean plays in the Theosophical Society's Greek Theater. Mundy was attending and reviewing such performances while writing the novel, even enacting a bit part in Tingley's Grecian drama, *The Aroma of Athens*. In *Om*, Ommony plays a series of roles: those he performs on stage, together with the identity of the Bhat-Brahmin actor he assumes in the vain hope of concealing his presence from Samdup. Similarly, Samding wears male clothes to facilitate her passage through India.

Between each chapter is a rich body of poetry, proverbs and pure philosophy adding profundity and transcendence to the novel. A number of the poems and sayings included in *Om* had previously appeared in *The Theosophical Path*, and Mundy had doubtless incorporated the suggestions and reactions to them as his outline of the story grew. The fact that Mundy cloaks his philosophy within the guise of authentic eastern authorities, as fragments "From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup," indicates his determination for the reader to accept the validity of Oriental wisdom. The sayings themselves are rich and sometimes obscure, changing in meaning to the reader over time; like the Jade of Ahbor, they are an object that gives the impression of never quite staying the same. *Om* becomes a journey that can be the oft repeated and never leaves the reader unaffected, a book which, perhaps more so than any other by Mundy, richly rewards re-reading.

Mundy used the generic universe of Indian adventure as a vehicle to advance a personal assimilation of Eastern teachings, as understood through theosophy, but even more by his own experience and study of the Orient. This background gave him a talent for making the fantastic seem plausible so that, while admitting he allowed his imagination to transmit and vitalize this philosophy to his readers, Mundy offered far more. "No one, not even Kipling, came closer to India's underlying reality than Talbot Mundy," *Om* has a "grasp of the English

in India and on the Indian philosophy that is substantial and powerful." In Mundy, as in his character Samding, East and West synthesize without clash or disharmony, and the twain must and shall meet.

For *Adventure* readers and other laymen, *Om* could serve as pure entertainment or an introduction to eastern thought, providing escapism mixed with Theosophy for the unsuspecting. For Theosophists, on the other hand, *Om* is a reaffirmation, fictionalizing and revitalizing their teaching in novel form. In offering eastern philosophy, *Om* inevitably subverts many of the West's traditional values and beliefs, in favor of evolution, selflessness, a belief in destiny, a search for inner merit at the expense of pride, and an acceptance of the deceptiveness of materialism. For the reader of *Om*, there is no victory over the lowest instincts of the self in either withdrawal from the world, contempt for pleasure, or physical exertion, whether following a Christian or Oriental pattern. There is no ultimate threshold where trial and progress end, either a heaven or a nirvana; the cycle of reincarnation and evolution is unceasing, climbing ever upward, no matter how slowly, never evading Karma. "Because you are doing well, it would not be good to believe you can not do better," the lama advises; "The road is long, and there are difficulties; but ye *must* face it."

Writing such a book as *Om* was a risky venture for Mundy; he chose to diverge from the conventional commercial path and deviate from the formulas of adventure fiction. While using the structure of the genre, the interpretation was entirely different from previous writers because of Mundy's profound respect and knowledge of Eastern thought. In *Om*, more strongly than any of his previous fiction, Mundy firmly established the literary pattern of looking to the East, not only for exoticism, but for wisdom and an alternative mode of living that might be superior to western habits. Mundy crystallized the archetype of the

Westerner who quits the dissatisfying colonial life to disguise himself as a native and search for the wisdom of the East. In this way *Om*, and later Mundy works such as *The Devil's Guard*, *Black Light*, *Full Moon* and *Old Ugly-Face*, revitalized and invigorated a cycle in fantasy-adventure literature.

As the *Saturday Review of Literature* said of *Om*, H. Rider Haggard's "stories are thin beside Mr. Mundy's story which is enriched by what is clearly a first-hand knowledge of India..." The same comparison could be made with Kipling's *Kim*, to which *Om* is sometimes likened. Noting that Mundy places the Lama at the center of the story, as the ultimate hero who teaches the main western figure, theosophical author Kenneth Morris remarked that *Om* contains "a character and a plot, which are absolutely new in the whole field of fiction." Mundy, unlike Kipling, foregrounded the Indians, along with their religious and cultural traditions, conscientiously denying Western assumptions of superiority. Mundy resented his book being called a "second *Kim*," since Mundy's interpretation of the figures of the Lama is totally different from that of Kipling, and indeed *Om* is arguably the better work, and certainly the more timeless. The Lama in *Kim* is fundamentally a passive, impractical figure, hardly a "Master"—in Mundy's words "as untrue to life, as stupid, effete, impossible and missionary-ignorant (to coin a phrase) as a character could be...[*Om*] is the only piece of fiction ever written that gives a true view of inner, that is esoteric philosophy of the Lamas, and a real inkling of who the so-called Mahatmas [Masters] really are."

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*Om* was perceptively and ecstatically reviewed by Gottfried de Purucker in December 1924 in *The Theosophical Path*, emphasizing the novel's psychological power. Theosophists quickly took *Om* to heart, since it perfectly expressed their deepest beliefs in a popular context. In March 1925, Mundy's novel, described as "profound truths in the guise of vivid and fascinating fiction" was placed on the "Book List of Standard Theosophical Literature," preceded only by the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and Katherine Tingley. Theosophists the world over immediately began translating *Om* into a number of languages, including German, Swedish, and Dutch, and the book was commercially translated into Slavic and French.

Although proud of his work, Mundy had expected *Om* to be criticized outside the theosophical community for its favorable portrayal of Eastern ideas. He was surprised when the book became a best-seller and proved equally popular abroad. A typical mainstream review of *Om* appeared in the *Manchester City News*. "The volume contains a wealth of Oriental lore, and is the product of a well-stored and scholarly mind. Those who want philosophy and...a work of fiction entirely out of the common may be safely commended to this work...The Lama's impressive teachings produce a deep impression...Mr. Mundy has produced a literary and philosophical masterpiece." Among those who spoke highly of *Om* were California's Progressive Senator Hiram Johnson, along with Alice Roosevelt Longworth, a regular Mundy fan, daughter of former president Theodore Roosevelt and wife of the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. During 1925 and beyond, *The Theosophical Path* joyfully reprinted excerpts from the stream of praise *Om* received in letters and reviews from around the globe.

[With this chapter of a forthcoming book the author adds many End Notes referencing supportive quotes. Because of limitations of our space, however, we cannot include them here.]



## THE VISION OF THE LORD BUDDHA<sup>1</sup>

G. de Purucker

When I was a boy of twelve I came upon a Buddhist quotation which fascinated imagination, mind, and heart. I think it was one of the things which in this life awoke me more than any other thing that I can recollect; at any rate it was one of the first. It is pure Theosophy and genuine Buddhist doctrine. It is this: The Lord Buddha is speaking, and I am paraphrasing somewhat his words in order to make them clearer: "O disciples, never let discouragement enter into your souls. See you suffering in the world, see you unhappiness and pain and ignorance, misery and distress which wring the heart? Disciples, all things are destined to pass into Buddhahood: the stones, the plants, the beasts, all the component atoms of these, each and every one, aye and sun and moon and stars and planets: all in future ages will become Buddha. Each one will become a Buddha."

What a marvelous picture! How it quiets the heart and stills the mind; for if one atom, one man, become a Buddha, everything will, for this Universe is One, broken into multitudes during Manvantara or manifestation; rooted in that One, living from it, and by it. In it we live and move and have all our being. Therefore some day, somewhere in the incalculable aeons of what we call the future, all now of the multitudes, suns and stars, planets, comets, gods, men, animals, plants, stones, atoms, elements, worlds, everything, each as individual, is destined for Buddhahood.

When I read that—I have given you the expanded gist of what I heard—for nearly three months I went around in a daze of spiritual delight and inner reawakening. To this day I could not tell you whether I ate or drank or slept.



I know I must have done so, but I have no recollection of anything except light; and the raising of the eyes inner and outer, upward and inward. Just that thought broke open the doors closed when I drank of the waters of Lethe, of forgetfulness, when last I died. The doors opened and the light came in, began to come in.

I think this extract gives us a most wonderful picture. Take the mineral kingdom: It is formed entirely of unconscious monads, that is monads unconscious on this plane, never unconscious in their own spheres. But what we call monads in the mineral kingdom are as it were the expressions of essential spiritual monads working and evolving down here on this plane, and going through these Gilgulim, as the Hebrew Qabbalah has it, meaning these lower halls of life and experience, these worlds of the ceaseless evolutionary journey; yet each one is essentially a god, each one in essence a Buddha, a ray of the Adi-Buddha or the Cosmic Buddha. And so it is with all things.

Therefore, the Lord Buddha said: "Disciples, when sorrow wrings your heart, when pain and suffering are too bitter to bear, when you see others dying for the needs, the mere needs of life: be not discouraged. Look into the future. Everyone of the multitudes some day will be a Buddha, Adi-Buddha [the Cosmic Buddha], therefore a Buddha, stones and plants, and beasts and men and gods, suns and stars and comets and the elements of them all."

Yet this recognition of the essential divinity of all, and the certain future Buddhahood of all, should never at any moment stay our hands from works of loving pity and helpfulness here and now; for it is here and now that lies our sublime duty of doing all we can to alleviate the world's suffering and need that are incident and necessary to the monads on their evolutionary journey.

<sup>1</sup>Wind of the Spirit p. 134

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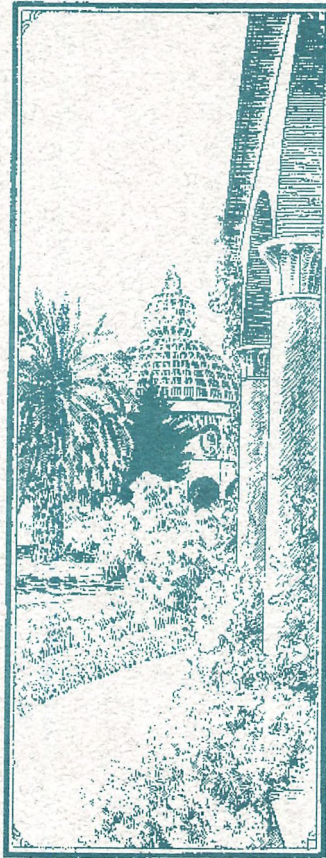
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